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THE WISDOM OF THE EAST SERIES

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ALAN W WATTS

MANIFOLD UNITY

TO
K. S. AND A. H -C.
IN
GRATEFUL RECOGNITION
OF
THEIR GENEROSITY

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THE HEART OF THE LOTUS IS 'ONE'

'AUM'—so chanted, in parable, the ancient Indian Seers—
Is the three-fold basic vibration, the musical SOUND
'To Be', Being, and Ceasing-from-being
Unfolding as a lovely flower, eight-petalled,
An octave of consequential notes ·
Seven the grades, the inter-locking ratios,
The fellowship linking the Many in the One
With the bond of brotherhood, of a common Father as sons.

'A,' they said, as they chanted solemnly,
Is the sound of building up,
'M,' they said, is the sound of breaking down,
And 'U' is the bridging sound of serialization
Sustaining, extending, holding in balance
The ebb and the flow of Being's course
—The 'Yang' and the 'Yin', the Chinese poets called it—
The relation between that we know as Time,
As Space, or as Consciousness,
Enabling the 'I' to conceive a 'Thou'

Gayatri, the Indian Sages called this measure,
The 'bird' *Gayatri*, swift hawk, flight of the Eagle to the Sun,
Bearer of the Plant of continued life
From generation to generation, spanning Time
Said they, who hummed this *mantra* Sound,
Seeking thus to demonstrate

THE HEART OF THE LOTUS IS 'ONE'

The Wheel of the law of progression :
Within the Cause lies the Effect,
Within the 'I' the seed of 'Thou',
Within that inconceivable, the limitless Eternal,
Lies Time, Space, what is, and what is not,
The germ of generation

The 'Heart' that 'speaks', the Egyptian Seers called it—
That utters the 'Word' we know as 'Creation'.
'Thoth', they named it, Tongue and Messenger,
Executive of the Power To BE

Eight-petalled Lotus, City of the Eight,
Octave of potentiality, all things containing,
Maintaining, and at the end resuming :
Lovely Harmonia's musical manifestation,
Source and Sum of Number,
Father and Mother of Doing, Being, and Knowing—
Within thy cup, O Flower, those Seers saw enshrined
The Golden Seed of Being's cycle
Verily, they sang, the Heart of this Lotus is ONE

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE

COMPASSION is not the characteristic that most Western people would attribute to ancient Eastern religion. The most striking feature of Eastern religion in general is its expression of a sense of underlying unity comprehending within itself the creative Principle manifested in the harmony of the Many and the One. This appears to most Western inquirers to be an intellectual rather than an emotional reaction to human experience. It is true that ancient Eastern civilization has always rated the serenity of the intellect in God, manifest in the universe and in man, higher than the turbulence of emotion that to many is inseparable from the idea of love.

It is a serenity that, so far, has not been attained by the civilization of those peoples who, not so many centuries past, were known as the barbarians of the North, a grouping, it might be salutary to recall, including both our own Nordic ancestors and those of the Germanic world. Those Hyperboreans who, in the centuries round about the beginning of the Christian era, were by the Greeks identified with the Celtic-speaking nations, were held—and, as I think, rightly—to have preserved something of the older Eastern natural

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philosophy, music, and religion ; but, whatever their cultured poets and teachers may have professed, the conduct of the Celtic-speaking peoples was sometimes quite as barbarous as that of the insurgent Germanic tribes. Indeed, their most noticeable political characteristic was the egoism that made it impossible for their nations to combine faithfully in the common cause of that freedom which, for themselves, they yet rated above every other human possession.

They loved liberty, but political co-operation for the common good between different groups, whether republican or monarchical in social organization, seemed to be beyond their powers. An intolerant pride, national selfishness, suspicion that bred treachery, defeated all attempts to harmonize their aims. Had it been otherwise, Vercingetorix might have won his struggle for the liberty of the Celtic-speaking world against Rome, and the history of Europe might have been different, especially the history of the Christian Church. As it was, the hard and unimaginative efficiency of Rome, and the ruthless and bloody cruelties of Germanic pirates, branded European civilization during those ages when the civilizing influence of the East, exercised from its last outposts in Alexandria and Byzantium, was slowly being submerged by the tide of political and religious regimentation. As always, regimentation in the intellectual and spiritual sphere, no less than in the political or social, halted the progress of civilization and bred intolerance in high places and lack of enterprise in the masses. Organic life is not in it ; nothing grows there but the spores of parasitic, destructive

REGIMENTATION OR CO-OPERATION ?

moulds that proliferate in the darkness of an unventilated soil.

It is often stated as axiomatic that what saved Civilization then was the renewed contact with the Near East, and through it with classical literature, made during the Crusades by Western Europeans, the result being seen in that intellectual and artistic floraison known as the Renaissance.

Was this true ? The future course of history is quite likely to falsify the assumption. We know to-day, more than once we did, about the value of so-called classical culture—of Graeco-Roman culture—relatively to the more adult thought and art of the East, and, for the purposes of this comparison, I include Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and the Caspian basin in 'the East', and would place Crete as a bridge, straddling the chasm between the ancient East and the New West whose standard-bearer, for the purposes of drawing the picture sharply, we may say was Dorian Greece. We know more to-day about the incredibly futile bickerings and hair-splittings of the early leaders of the Christian Church, and of the semi-political jobbery that branded such liberal thinkers as our British Pelagius and John the Scot (of Ireland) with the name of heretics while crowning the dark head of a perfervid Romano-African dictator such as Augustine with the official halo of sanctity. If historical research is not altogether submerged in the coming decade, we shall soon know more about the world-wide spiritual re-awakening that took place during the course of the intellectual movement for synthesis in religious belief that we know as Gnosticism. We already

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know that this, far from being a Christian heresy, was a pre-Christian movement, on whose surging tide primitive Christianity was borne both eastward and westward to undergo its most complete sea-change on reaching Rome. It is curious how long the local moulds of men's thinking retain their shape. Authoritarianism was a plant that grew up in Rome, nourishing its roots in the grave of an Etruscan colony. The Roman Church grew true to the stock, and the Fascist Empire has been deliberately grafted on it.

Primitive—as distinct from authoritarian—Christianity was essentially an Eastern spiritual movement that attempted to gather up in itself and simplify a synthesis of the religious cosmic philosophy of the East. It sought to voice anew the oft-recurring protest of the wiser minds of the East against a misreading of Unity as an egoistic and exclusive possessiveness towards God by the aristocrats of religion. Its effective protest was the insistence on divine Compassion towards the humblest of men. Primitive Christianity was a warning that, until men recognized their own unity as brothers and sons of one Father, they never could attain unity with God.

Thanks to the printing press, the message of Jesus of Nazareth himself, as distinct from the official shibboleths of the regimented Churches, is within easy reach of all.

That which will be attempted here is to recall what is less easy of access. This is the oft-recorded verdict of the wise men of the Ancient East that divine Unity, since it is based on a sublime *harmonia* to which the universe bears witness, is also an expression of divine Compassion. Poets

THE UNIVERSAL SYMPATHY

and seers have testified to this over and over again both before and since the ministry of the Palestinian Jew, who proved his claim to divine sonship by demonstrating his right to call himself the Son of Man.

Such an attempt is overdue, for never was it more necessary than it is to-day to reassure ourselves with the testimony of as great a cloud of witness as possible that the message of divine Compassion that was brought to mankind nineteen hundred and forty-odd years ago is implicit in Creation. That, if mankind would have it so, Kindness and Love would prevail over the Selfishness and Cruelty that we ourselves have loosed upon ourselves in loosing them upon our fellow creatures. Perhaps what is to most modern Europeans, and even to Orientals who have been nurtured in the materialistic and mechanistic philosophy of the past century, an angle of view that is quite fresh just because it is so very old that it has gradually slipped from human memory, may help in the recovery of a vision of eternal Truth that has been veiled by the gathering mists of doubt and misunderstanding this many a long day past

Ye ask, who are those that draw us to the kingdom, if the kingdom is in Heaven? . . . the fowls of the air, and all beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, these are they which draw you, and the kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whoever shall know himself shall find it. Strive, therefore, to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the almighty Father; and ye shall know that ye are in the city of God, and ye are the city.

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Let not him who seeks . . . cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall be astonished ; astonished he shall reach the kingdom, and having reached the kingdom he shall rest.

Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and wherever there is one alone, I say, I am with him. Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me ; cleave the wood, and there am I.

Thou hearest with one ear—but the other thou hast closed.

These are sayings of Jesus, written records dating from not later than A.D. 140, earlier than any of the extant texts of the canonical Gospels, excavated at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt ¹ They are a fitting prelude to what follows.

¹ *New Sayings of Jesus and Fragments of a Lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus.*
Translated by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt London, 1904

CHAPTER II

KARUNA DIVINE COMPASSION

FAR back in the story of civilization, when the Sumerians had come down from the hills to the plains of Mesopotamia, the popular picture of the divine ONE, who had created the universe, was that of *Ama-muh*, the 'begetting Mother', 'who knows lamentation, who abides among her people'.¹

There is a hymn to her, translated by the late Dr. Stephen Langdon, the American Assyriologist at Oxford, that perhaps was intended to be sung on behalf of a woman in travail, or that may have been chanted during the ritual services in which the divine Being was annually implored to allow the spring Sun to be 'born' once more and bring rebirth to nature. It always has to be remembered, in studying the religious poetry of the ancient East, that devotional language, like the language of lovers, poets, and story-tellers, was almost entirely pictorial, metaphorical, richly—indeed, from our standpoint, daringly—imagist. In this hymn, the divine Being, who is continually creating and recreating the universe, and the visible witness of whose life-giving activity and order was held to be the sun by day and the moon and her attendant stars by night, is addressed as "the divinity

¹ *Tammuz and Ishtar*, S. Langdon, p. 60. Oxford, 1914.

KARUNA: DIVINE COMPASSION

who surveys mankind, Mother of the faithful breast", and, on behalf of the petitioner, it is prayed "Piteous art thou ! Oh, for me, compassion take !"¹

It does not really matter whether the hymn was part of a springtime ritual or, more particularly, a chanted prayer for an individual suffering woman longing to be delivered, the fact remains unaltered that the divine Source of 'being', and the upholder and guide of suffering humanity, was regarded as piteous and compassionate, like a mother, as well as being the very principle of justness and unfailing order. Such of the hymns and rituals of Sumeria and Babylonia as have been translated for us certainly show that the universe was regarded primarily as the expression of the divine law of unity and unerring justness that was held to be the 'Word'—or perhaps, better, the 'Utterance', because it was essentially a chanted or musical 'Word'—of the ONE, made manifest, not only in the Many, but in the serialization of the One in the concept 'past-present-future', or, as we should say, in Time.

It is also true that the beauty and wonder of this divine Utterance claimed the first allegiance of their poets and natural philosophers alike, and that the Mesopotamians' worship of the Divine ONE consisted almost wholly in lauding this beauty, particularly as it was manifested in the regular motions of the heavens, the recurring seasons, and the succession of day to night. Their festivals, moreover,

¹ *Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms*, Langdon, p 288 Paris, London, and New York, 1909

THE WHEEL OF LAW

were occasions for celebrating this wondrous beauty and triumphant Law and for expounding it to the populace in an endless series of religious pantomimes setting forth in allegory the story of cosmic creation and of the seasons. Their sacrifices and their prayers were mainly directed towards demonstrating the ardent hope that Creation would continue to roll on its way through Time, and that the promise of Spring should not fail. There was a strong sense of the criminal folly of doing anything that might upset the sublime procession of the seasons and the years—which were regarded as the very manifestation of the Divine Order and the Divine Unity—tempered with a wholesome fear of the consequences to mankind ! Such an event as an eclipse, for instance, was terrifying, and seemed to suggest divine retribution for wilful error on the part of mankind or at any rate a stern divine reminder that retribution must surely follow error. The conscience of man is rarely free from the knowledge that wrongs have been done by man, hence when catastrophe seemed to threaten, a sense of wrongdoing was a natural reaction. Many of the allegories and the pantomimes, devised, we must suppose, by the temple priests, deliberately worked upon this wholesome fear of the consequences of ill-doing. Yet, through it all, those men of Civilization's dawn knew, intuitively, that divine Compassion was no less of the essence of this Power that spoke through the manifold universe than was that joy-inspiring Order whose beauty captivated their thinkers and whose practical benevolence, manifested in the recurring blessings of natural

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increase in field and farmstead, and in the human family in the home, stirred the hearts of the simple populace to joyful gratitude.

I would not describe this as 'faith' so much as *conviction*.

The most astonishing thing about the cosmic religion of the ancient Sumerians was this conviction of divine Unity, of Power, Beauty, and Justness. It was a conviction that arose out of thoughtful contemplation of the working of the universe. There is ruthlessness in Nature—it appears even in undisciplined man—if we regard destruction and death as the end of the chapter. A proportion of mankind, despite its lip-service to religious systems, has always so regarded destruction and death, because a considerable proportion of mankind neither troubles to study the universe around it nor stops to think about the amazing unity and order that the very existence of Time and Life demonstrates as being implicit in Creation. Those old thinkers and poets of the dawn of civilization were very far from regarding destruction and death as a full-stop. They were both scientific observers and poets, and the unfailing order which they observed in the universe was adequate testimony, to their thoughtful minds, of what we to-day should probably describe as the indestructibility of the fundamental material of the universe demonstrated in the workings of evolution, or, as I myself would prefer to put it, in 'growth', since, to my mind, life is a function of Growth, rather than *vice versa*.¹ I am ready

¹ A point of view developed more fully in my *Music of Growth*. Scholartis Press, 1933.

DIVINE WITNESS OF NATURE

to admit that this way of looking at Creation, at Growth, has been imposed upon me equally by two studies—firstly, by the study of Nature itself, as biophysics, and more particularly as radioactivity, has revealed her workings; and secondly,* by the study of ancient Eastern cosmic religious philosophy, as the old poets and makers of allegories have set it forth.

The natural philosophers and poets of Sumerian and Babylonian civilization regarded the entire drama of natural birth and growth as something which in itself bore irrefragable testimony to the merciful kindness of the Divine Power manifested in 'Being'. They visualized this divine merciful kindness towards themselves most completely in the fructifying light and warmth of the sun, in the fertilizing quality of the life-giving waters, and in the regularizing quality of the unfailing guidance of the moon and the stars by night. It must be remembered that Night was much more familiar to those old peoples than it is to us, who live amid island mists and depend so much on artificial lighting. The heat of day made travel by night something that was familiar routine. Wild beasts of prey made the watching of flocks and herds by night essential. Agriculture depended on profiting by the seasons and by the annual flood-waters, and this, in turn, necessitated some method of measuring time and predicting seasons. Consequently the study of the motions of the heavenly bodies was imposed upon them by the very circumstances of their lives and the clime in which their life was set. They studied them to some purpose.

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The degrees of our compass, the familiar face of our clock, many of the weights and measures still used in different parts of the world, all are inherited by modern civilization from the systematization of those old Mesopotamian astronomers ; our names for most of the stars and constellations, which we are wont to trace no further back than the Greeks or the Arabs, are further legacies from that far-off civilization that flowered in the land bounded by the two great Rivers. Perhaps only our modern physicists are able to fathom the depths of the reasoned veneration that these pioneers of civilization felt for the order displayed by the stars in their courses. The awe and veneration inspired in them stimulated intellectual thought and systematization of a kind that has no parallel in our modern civilization, but at the same time it kindled in them the poet's ardent response to beauty, and so resulted in those cosmic allegories in which the Divine Being at the heart of all this amazing manifestation was extolled and hymned under an almost infinite variety of aspects. The Divine Order could be stated with a certain economy by a scientific systematization, but such a statement was not for the ' man in the street '. For him it had to be stated by the poet. And the poet found that the supreme Unity was artistically inexpressible, as a Unity. He was obliged to sing and hymn those manifold manifestations whereby the humble lover of beauty might apprehend, in glimpses and snatches of drama, some fraction of some among the many aspects of the One. It was in the poems and hymns of the temple ' mysteries '—what I have called

THE OLDEST RELIGIOUS BALLET

religious pantomimes—that the lofty ideas of poets and wise men were focused, for the better understanding of the people, in such dramatic images as this of the faithful Mother.

We are here in a stratum of historical religion that is older, but in no way less adult, than the mystical expression of individual personal religion that we have come to know best in such collected writings as those of the Indian authors of the Upanishads. For some modern spirits these Indian writings are more inspiring, more charged with deep religious emotion, than the older cosmic religious philosophy out of which this later mysticism grew.

I am not sure whether this older religion was not the higher of the two. It was not so much the personal faith of an individual as it was the intellectual and spiritual response to his maker of educated mankind as a whole. Perhaps I can put it in this way. The personal mysticism of the individual, in later times, was the passionate, almost possessive, response of a child or a youthful lover to his beloved. The intellectual response, in earlier times, of a whole civilization to divine beauty and order, manifesting in Nature, was an adult recognition of God, the 'One', by that part of the manifested divine Being which consciously shared, to a small extent, the divine Being's intellective and consciously creative mind. The divine Being 'uttered', as these old people of Sumer and Akkad claimed, divinely musical 'Words' (musical in the acoustical sense) which voiced the divine Thought, which were yet not separate from the divine Thought but were its actual effects. They visualized the

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divine Mummu (*enem*) or Word of the divine Mind as a 'Creator' and they visualized the reasoning and creative mind of mankind as taking part in the divine 'Utterance' because mankind was part of the manifold manifestation of the divine Being. The acoustical simile was not, as many generations of civilized man have been content to accept it as being, a mere metaphor. There is good reason to believe that the ancient Sumerians, for whom music was an integral part of religious ritual, had discovered the mathematical inevitability of the scale of musical sounds to which the name *harmonia*—or 'fitting together' of parts—was given by the Greeks, and whose mathematical basis has been rediscovered in our own day by that great musicologist, Miss Kathleen Schlesinger.¹ The kind of mathematical order demonstrated in this natural scale of sound intervals—of the relationship existing between the frequencies of the musical notes in this scale—was something that was capable of scientific proof, and that, apart from musical performance, could only be stated mathematically. It reinforced, if reinforcement were necessary, their apprehension of a fundamental order reached through their study of number and of measure, the systematization of both of which they had based on astronomy and geometry. Consequently, when Creation, conceived as a manifestation through the media of time and

¹ *The Greek Aulos* a Study of its Mechanism and of its Relation to the Modal System of Ancient Greek Music, followed by a Survey of the Harmonia in Survival or Rebirth in Folk Music. By Kathleen Schlesinger. London, 1938

THE PERFECT SYMBOL

space of the God ONE in the Many, was likened by them to a musical sound possessing meaning, they were reducing to a symbol that the finite mind of man could apprehend something which infinitely transcended human understanding in its amplitude and beauty yet whose beauty was similar in kind to that order they found capable of demonstration in music.

What I am concerned to emphasize here, is that this older religion, intellectual and serene in its recognition of God expressed in his Universe—of which mankind was an integral part—was a religion that was neither cold nor rigid. It took for granted the fact of Compassion—a word which means fellow feeling or 'suffering with'. Not only did they take it for granted in the kindness inherent in the regularity with which the returning sun and all the joy of springtime and harvest could be counted upon, and for which religious mankind showed itself joyfully grateful—as for the return of one mourned as dead yet returned to life—but they accepted it also in creating that warm imagery in which the Source of Being was visualized as the Universal Mother. So death was not necessarily something cruel in the eyes of these wise people. Death was change. It was change of the kind undergone by the seed, buried in the soil, that sprouts again at the touch of the spring sun and the caress of the rain. Where all partook of the nature of the One and Whole, manifested in the million modulations of Time and the material Universe, how could the changes incidental to that modulation, but which in no wise wasted or blotted out

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any component part of the Whole, be regarded as unjust or cruel? This was not what many Western people think of when they speak of 'pantheism', which, indeed, would appear to be a purely Western misconception of an Eastern idea. This old cosmic philosophy anticipated Einstein in regarding manifestation of the One as something that appeared to take place in *Time*, as being, indeed, a serialization of something that transcended the limitations of the human mind in grasping the fact of Being. In that general rationalization of the universe, of which I have spoken already, those wise men of Mesopotamia related the expansion of the material universe to its expansion in Time. They conceived Time and Space as ideally measurable, but not as completely measurable within the limited experience of that part of manifestation represented in the mind of Man himself. They were forced to the concept of the 'One and the Whole' as differing aspects of the Same. And they sought to render their scientific rationalization amenable to the same kind of ineluctable law which they were convinced held the entire manifested universe together. There was no room for cruelty within the perfection of this ideal scheme. On the contrary, evil was seen to consist—if I may use a homely simile—in throwing a spanner into the works. To upset the living equilibrium of this exquisitely balanced manifestation of divine Harmony constituted discord, and discord was its own doom and damnation. 'Discord', as a character, figured in their pantomimes (As *Saltu*, rival of the Creatress.)

To thinkers who had so strong a conviction of the unity

THE POET AS SEER

of the manifold universe and of all life as the very expression of the *Deus Unicus*, there could be nothing terrifying or cruel in the operation of change as it affected individual parts of the Whole, for the Whole was still the sum of the parts. That which hurt the smallest part must injure the Whole. Disharmony was a trouble that must cause grievous injury to the Whole and hence to every part of the Whole. From this it followed naturally that the sorrows of the least of God's creatures must pierce the beating heart of Creation.

These are the adult ideas of a reasoned cosmic philosophy. They could not be fully set forth in all their compelling logic in popular pantomime. May I suggest a parallel? Our greatest dramatic poet, Shakespeare, wrote largely for the groundlings in popular playhouses, and yet there are profound truths and wonderful beauty in his masques and comedies. So, too, in the cosmic allegories dramatized in the religious pantomimes of the Sumerians and Babylonians there is sublime poetry that shadows forth the great truths of Sumerian cosmic religion, yet it is inevitable that, although devised for the ignorant populace, the poetry in these pantomimes conveys more of beauty to the adult intelligence familiar with the philosophy than it ever could do to the uninstructed groundlings enjoying the dramas as a spectacle. Western peoples have been too ready to mistake the stage machinery of the pantomime for the religion of these pioneers of civilization and too apt to take the fantasy literally. It is time that the philosophic and scientific religion behind the

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fantasies should be rescued from oblivion because it has a message of hope for the schismatic world of to-day.

The full logical expression of the adult ideas of the Sumerian and Babylonian people about God and the Universe must be sought in the scientific rationalization achieved by their civilization, in their linkage of cosmic ideas with the facts of astronomy, mathematics, music. It is too big a subject to be fully developed in an essay such as this, but I would like to put readers in the way of understanding that these ideas were reasoned and scientific, and that, far from being based on a crude polytheism, they were, first and last, grounded in a scientific knowledge of order as it was apprehended in Nature and demonstrated in the physical laws of musical sound and of number.¹ Of this there is ample indication in the literary remains of this early civilization if we study it in the light of other and derivative systems that have survived into later times.

As the years and centuries went by and as civilization spread, the basic principles of this cosmic religious philosophy were passed on to other peoples. We meet them again in the Nile Valley, and we meet, too, the same urge to shadow forth the sublime mystery of the unique God's utterance, in manifold creation, in a series of allegoric religious dramas and rituals. Philosophy and allegories passed, too, to Syria,

¹ The writer is presently engaged upon the task of setting out these ideas as they emerge from the astronomy, mathematics, music, and allegory of this early civilization, and hopes to publish the results of this research in due course

AGONY OF DISCORD

Anatolia, Crete, Greece, and the land of the Hyperboreans, in a westward stream, and eastward they passed to North-West India, Thibet, and China. Everywhere, with the conviction of unity in multiplicity and of the justness and harmony of the laws of Being exhibited in the serialization of the One through the media of Time and the spatial universe, there passed, likewise, the idea of divine Compassion for the unhappiness of mankind when it fell into discord and suffered disunion. All human suffering that is inflicted by human beings is the fruit of disunion and discord. It comes from deliberate or unconscious disharmony that is an act of treachery towards the One and Whole. It cannot but call forth compassion from the One and Whole, and it should call forth compassion from every individual and collectivized part of the Whole.

Looking down the dim aisles of history it seems to me as though the loss of this intuitive knowledge of the divine Compassion is accounted for by the loss of the conviction of the divine Unity manifested in the multiple and serialized universe.

CHAPTER III

HARMONIA THE LOGIC AND THE LAW

IN Mesopotamia the Sumerian philosophy passed over directly into the body of an already existing Semitic religion which absorbed it. The blending of the two seem to me to be the re-uniting of two streams that originally flowed from a single source rather than the marriage of two independent systems. The Sumerians may not themselves be the originators of the philosophic system we associate with them, but they brought it into the light of history as *we know it*. Probably we have still to find the people and the culture in whose midst civilization grew up and from whom both Sumerians and the peoples of the Indus Valley, and also the peoples of Akkad, received it in a yet more distant past than that which has been traced in Mesopotamia. The pseudo-historical chronological systems of the Mesopotamians, the Indians, and the Egyptians, not to mention the Chinese, bear traces of having been borrowed from that very rationalization of which I have spoken before. The 'reigns' of the Ten and Eight antediluvian Kings of the Sumerians and Babylonians (as the six 'days' of the Old Testament creation), the *yugas* of India, the thirty dynasties of Egypt, and the imperial reigns of ancient China as set out in literary

TIME' AS SERIAL MANIFESTATION

texts, are all of them allegoric serializations of the manifestation which we call 'creation' and which, as the *yuga* proportionate divisions indicate, are intended to shadow forth the Time element in manifestation and more particularly the phases of it represented by our notions of 'Past' and 'Present'. The acceptance of these allegoric mensurations of Time—which denoted that which was, and is—as being literal records of actual historic events, has resulted in chaos in regard to the time scale worked out by archaeologists for the relative evolution of culture in the various centres of civilization. In that time scale all has been based on an identification (or, to be accurate, on three varying identifications) of a Sothic cycle¹ with the supposed period of King 'Menes' of Egypt. It is recognized that 'Menes' was not the name of an actual pharaoh, but it has not been realized that the first twelve dynasties, at all events, are ideal time divisions, and that the royal family identified by Alexandrian scribes with the "18th" of these 30 divisions probably succeeded directly the royal family identified with the "12th", although the evidence of art and archaeology itself clearly points to it. The juxtaposition of 12th and 18th would make hay of the arbitrary time scale of the archaeologists, and a wreck such as that sometimes seems to be a greater catastrophe, to the scholastic mind, than keeping Truth in

¹ A Sothic cycle consisted of the 1,460 years that elapsed between heliacal risings of the star Sothis (Sirius) that corresponded accurately with the conventional date of such rising, the first day of the first month of each year of 360 days.

HARMONIA: THE LOGIC AND THE LAW

blinkers. Some day the discovery of a new 'Palace of Minos' by another Evans, and the finding of a new Rosetta stone enabling still undeciphered scripts, such as those of Crete and the Indus Valley, to be read, may throw a flood of light on the first home of civilization and on the earlier stages by which mankind arrived at the concept of creation as something serialized in a Past-Present-Future cycle ruled by the logic of numbers. In the Egyptian allegories and in the ritual recorded in the *Book of the Dead* there is plenty of testimony to the derivative character of these allegories from the ancient and logical system of Mesopotamia. It is curious, though it may be mere coincidence, that the name of 'King Menes', in its Graecized form, resembles so closely the Greek form (*mina*, from *mana*) of the basic cubic measure of the Sumerian rationalization of mensuration, from which everything else evolves, namely, the *Gin*, a 60th part, which is also a unit, since the number 60—a crossing, one might say, between the number 6 and the number 10—was not only 'unit', but 'whole', in the Sumerian system, and was the sacred number given to their First Principle, *An*, of which the begetting Mother, *Nin-anna* or *Ama-muh*, was simply the femininized expression. It is even conceivable that the Aramaic 'Writing on the Wall' that, in the Hebrew scripture, the Jewish prophet Daniel was the only sage at the Babylonian court to decipher, had its explanation in some occult reference to the M-N-W, or 'counted out' and 'measured off' doom *that was Time*. For there are many traces of the old Sumerian cosmic philosophy, not

SIGNIFICANCE OF NUMBER

only in the Gnostic system of the Mandaeans¹ but in the Gnosticism of the Jewish Kabbalah, so much of which has a strong affinity with portions of the Book of Daniel (compiled in the 2nd cent. B.C.) and with Ezekiel, also a late book, and with the Revelation of St. John the Divine in the Christian New Testament.

The loss of the conviction of multiple Unity, together with the loss of the conviction of Compassion, is patent in the patriarchal orthodox religion of the Jews of the time of Christ, despite the inclusion, in their canonical Scriptures, of so much of the poetic expression of the old Mesopotamian cosmic religious philosophy. The gain in poetry in the actual telling of the creation drama, multiplied a hundredfold, as it is, by our beautiful English translation, is great, but the loss in logical meaning is perhaps greater.

The Semites seem to have shared that cosmic philosophy of the Sumerians which regarded the Moon and the Sun, and such stars as signified 'Moon' and 'Sun' by reason of the position in the stellar heaven of these luminaries at different times and seasons (e.g. Venus the precursor and herald of the Sun), as being in a special way the demonstrators of the orderly procession of Time which was the manifestation of the God 'One'. The oldest name for God, of the Northern Hebrew tribes, for instance, was El (or, when the name signified the One in the Many, Elohim),

¹ *Mandaean Studies*, Svend Aage Pallis (London and Copenhagen, 1926); *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran*, E S Drower (Stevens) (Oxford, 1937)

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and this name, with its derivatives, Ilah, Il, and Allah, originally was applied to the One, more particularly as that One was *manifested by* the 'Traveller' and Regulator of Time, the Moon, or that other Lord of Time, the Sun. The Sumerian equivalent for El was Zu-en (*Sin*), from which the mountain range of Sinai, seat of the worship of El and of Yahve, apparently took its name. This God, One, was called by the Southern Hebrew tribes *Yaw*, or Yahve—Y-H-W—and in the sacred writings of the Jews this consonantal combination was extended into a verbal form having the meaning 'He who causes to be', but they read it as *Adonai*, 'Lord'.¹ Kabbalist mystics made a great deal out of the sacred Name which no man must utter, since to utter or create was the prerogative of God, alone, and no mere man could thus 'create' God without blasphemy. To these mystics the name was made up of the four consonants *yod, he, vau, he*, the mysterious Tetragrammaton, or FOUR. There was a numerical significance in this, best understood by reference to the Pythagorean Tetractys "4" and to the idea, inherited from Sumerian cosmic allegoric teaching, of Creation being expressed in Time as well as spatially. Of this the symbol was the Cube, and, more especially, the cubed Sumerian foot, which was the basic standard, from which all mensuration started, called the *gin* or *mana* (Greek *mina*), a unit

¹ There is a discussion of the names 'El' and 'Yaw' in the first chapters of Langdon's *Semitic Mythology*, vol. v of the Archaeological Institute of America's Series "The Mythology of all Races". Boston, 1931.

THE TWO FACES OF BEING

that was at the same time a 60th, '60' being the Unit that signified the First Principle, AN, also personified by the goddess M-N-W, the Semitic verb (Hebrew, *men*) to count, allot, measure off, or regulate, hence used of that prime 'regulator' and 'measurer' the Moon, and thus, by a natural transition, of Destiny. (Hence, too, in course of time, the 'shears' of Fate.) M-N-W was also one of the titles of Ishtar, the Semitic name for Innini, who is thus equated with the First Principle of Being. It was so that these early thinkers expressed their profound belief that divine Law, manifesting as Number, was an integral part of the Absolute.

The fourfold proportionate relationship of the periods of Time, comprising a past and a present that are known, a future that is to be, and is unknown, and then something transcending the notion 'Time' that is expressed in Creation, and which implies a Beginning-again, is a feature of all the cosmic philosophies deriving from the Sumerian—or perhaps we should say from that as yet unknown parent of the Sumerian cosmic philosophy. The linkage with the spatial universe through the motions of the heavenly bodies is an attempt to show that Time and Matter are but two faces of one fact, and that fact the 'utterance' by the One God of all that we sum up in the word 'Creation'—or rather more, since we have come to associate the word with a definite moment in Time past, whereas all Oriental thought conceives it as something continuously taking place. The cosmic ideas of the Kabbalist mystics in connection with the

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Fourfold Name have been held to be late borrowings from the Arabs and the Greeks, or the Egyptians, but it seems much more probable that they were ideas that had been kept alive from a much earlier period, when they were borrowed, along with the allegories of *Genesis*, from Mesopotamia, and, possibly, revived during the Captivity, and certainly reinforced during the sojourn in Egypt. The struggle of all the Semites to preserve intact the 'oneness' of their God may have begun in a defensive movement against the kind of popular ignorance that loses sight of the Reality in its veneration for the Symbol. This monotheistic tendency degenerated into a fanatical exclusiveness in which the Hebrew God, alone, and none other but he, was 'God', and in which the One God manifested in the Many, venerated by other peoples, was not 'God' at all, being, in fact, invisible to the Hebrews, who saw only the symbols which other ignorant populations no doubt came to idolize. The same sort of thing is not unknown to-day, not only among the ignorant masses who are adherents of Eastern religions, but among the ignorant masses who are adherents of the Christian faith. Are not the Communal troubles in India, at bottom, founded in religious jealousy between the Mussulmans who proclaim that 'Allah is One' and the Hindus who claim that God is both One and Many? The terrible egoism of man when he claims that he, alone, is able to see God, is, indeed, one of the prime factors of human disunity—of treachery to God, the father of all men, and to man's own brother man—and should have been impossible had the

WHEN MAN BETRAYS THE CREATOR

pioneers of our civilization been able to impress on posterity the conception of their seers and poets of the unity of the Supreme Being and his universe and of the essentially compassionate character of the Creator manifesting in creation. The very wealth of the imagery of these pioneers seems to have militated against it. Mankind, as partner in man's own evolution, with the Creator, has created exclusive gods in his own exclusive image, and fallen down and worshipped them. He has failed to use his creative, imaginative power, which he derives from the Supreme Creator, in harmony with the divine composition, and has called up those negations of Unity—illusion, devils, and discord

The same loss of the idea of unity, and of its concomitant compassion, is to be seen in the cults of the Romans, and also in the worldly sophistication of the Greeks, whose cultured writers and artists remembered only the pantomime figures inherited from Babylonia, Egypt and India. For the most part they slyly jeered at them, or used them as the *dramatis personae* of graceful literary tales, as, for example, that delightful fantasy of Cupid and Psyche contained in the *Metamorphosis* of Apuleius along with other translations from the Greek.¹ The religious content of that particular fantasy had evaporated, and Apuleius included it because the conceit was too delightful to be left out of one or other of his books. It once had meaning.

A modern writer, almost as felicitous, has produced a

¹ *The Golden Ass of Apuleius*, translated by Thomas Taylor. London, 1822, reprinted in 1893.

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charming fantasy upon the life of Christ, in which there would appear to be some grains of historical truth—however strangely come by. George Moore, in *The Brook Kerith*, takes seriously the theme of Jesus of Nazareth's sojourn among the Essenes. Ginsburg's rather arid little essay¹ dismisses Josephus's hint, that they resembled the Pythagoreans, by such mislading arguments as that the Pythagoreans were *polytheists* and the Essenes monotheistic Jews. Josephus notes that they loved one another more than the other kinds of Jewish philosophers did, and that they took great pains in studying the writings of the ancients. At the reappearance of the Sun they said the Jewish prayer of the *Chassidim*, or 'old believers', still in use, in which occur the phrases :

Lord of the universe ' in thy great mercy, have mercy upon us . . . O Lord, be thou praised, be thou great in wisdom who hast ordained and created the rays of the sun. The infinitely Good has formed a glorious testimony for his Name. He surrounded his majesty with luminaries . . . Benign are the luminaries which our Lord has created. He has formed them in wisdom, intelligence, and understanding. filled with splendour and brightness, their glory illuminates all the world, rejoicing in rising and joyous in setting they perform with awe the will of their Creator . . . he called the sun, and light rose, he saw and shaped the form of the moon

The Essenes were said to be compassionate, and they were called Nazarites.

¹ *The Essenes their History and Doctrines*, Christian D Ginsburg, LL D. London, 1864, from which the prayer is quoted

‘EVERYMAN’

An unprejudiced reading of the Gospels, in the light of comparative religious studies, does suggest the probability that Jesus—perhaps in Egypt—had been profoundly influenced by the more ancient wisdom of the East. He regarded himself as the Second Adam, and Adam, borrowed by the Jews from Mesopotamian Allegory, was an allegoric figure for Mankind in the cosmic poems which represented creation dramatically, that is to say, as something that had taken place at a point in Time, whereas, philosophically, creation was regarded as the manifestation of the One that continued to take place *parrī passu* with the unfolding of Time itself. Incidentally, ‘The Son of Man’ was an expression used of this typical figure of Mankind in the Book of Daniel, in the older part of the book forming a collection of dreams and visions. It occurs in Chapter VII, where Daniel’s vision of ‘the Ancient of Days’—a recognizable Jewish version of the Mesopotamian figure for Time, which, for convenience, is usually given the Greek title of Kronos (identified with El)—is a curious medley of Babylonian pictures, such as would be conceded, I think, by any psychologist, to have the authentic marks of dream, and, I would add, the dream of a certain type of dreamer whose imaginative life is so vivid, and undisciplined, that the frontiers between day-dream and actual observation, and between day-dream and night-dreaming, are almost obliterated. It is a type that is prone to regard itself as messianic, and whose best-known historic representative is Joan of Arc. Such seers of visions and dreamers of dreams as these are not, as a

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rule, thrown up by a civilization in which science is a popular possession ; nor in one in which allegory is fully recognized to be a poet's legitimate presentation of truth that is too abstract for popular demonstration but is yet regarded as everyman's possession and not as the prerogative of a favoured few. When persons of undisciplined imagination, unfamiliar with the wonders of science, are brought into contact with a highly symbolic art, and more especially with symbolic pantomime, their imagination is apt to become so excited that the symbols are played with, irrespective of their content of meaning, and fantastic visions are likely to be the result, whose interpretation, moreover, is jealously guarded by the dreamer as his personal prerogative. In ages past the visionaries were almost bound to relate their dreams to religion. To-day they are more often related to the personal problems of sex-life, or to politics. Such fantasias are a special feature of Jewish culture. They were made the vehicle for both moral and political teaching. They are completely absent from the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, whose mind, so far as we have any records exhibiting it, was singularly well balanced, sweet, and sane. His was the profundity of simplicity. If, as seems to me probable, he had drunk deeply of the ancient wisdom of the East, and was bent on revealing mankind's unity with God, he avoided both the adventitious aid of self-induced visions and dream fantasias, and the technicalities of a scientific exposition. He was free from the egotistic possessiveness towards God of many of the Indian mystics, and also from the subtle mystification of

JESUS AS POET

the Chinese teachers who delight to speak in riddles while pretending to be as quiet and clear as a sunlit pool. Jesus of Nazareth, though he made no claims in that direction, was a natural poet. He spoke so simply of the profound truths he had to tell that both Jews and Greeks were mystified and failed to perceive his meaning. What he spoke, however, he also lived. And there was no possible misunderstanding there. His life was the most perfect testimony to that Compassion which, as I have tried to show, is a necessary expression of divine Unity.

If, indeed, Jesus of Nazareth had dwelt for a time in a community of Essenes, he had dipped deep into the well of ancient wisdom and the water he drew up from it was pure and limpid, not muddied and obscured with extraneous matter as was the teaching—in so far as it has been correctly reported—of the Essenes. It may well be that the fashionable movement towards anchoritism¹ that proved such a curious feature of fourth-century Christianity owed something to the example of the Palestinian and Syrian Essenes, whose main social characteristic was their desire to live apart from the wicked world in a select backwater of their own, in which all men should be equal, having all things in common, and from which all that reminds man of War should be banished; they feared also the lasciviousness—the Elder Pliny's description, not mine—of women. They did, however, teach, and put into practice, man's essential

¹ Dorothy Brooke's *Pilgrims were they All* (London, 1937) gives a brightly written but well-documented sketch of the movement.

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duty of cultivating the earth with his own hands, and Philo, the Jewish-Alexandrian philosopher, who was a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth, said of them that "They condemn owners of slaves, not only as unjust, inasmuch as they corrupt the principle of equality, but also as *impious*, because they *destroy the law of nature*, which, like a mother, brought forth and nourished all alike, and made them all legitimate brethren, not only in word but in deed," and Philo pointed out that they considered that this relationship had been destroyed in the world at large by treacherous covetousness which engendered enmity instead of cordiality, hatred instead of love ¹ All who wrote about the Essenes were struck by their compassionateness

The life of Jesus, in so far as we know it from the Gospel narratives, demonstrated clearly that the ideal of a spiritual 'Ivory Tower' was, to him, incompatible with the divine compassion arising out of the unity of God and Man. His teaching poured back into the empty vessel of Jewish written history the living stream of the ancient conviction of divine Unity, and his life and his words overflowed with the conviction of the divine Compassion. It has been left to the organized Christian Church to empty his teaching out of the creeds and to substitute for it the arid definitions of their Councils. As if the poetry of his words, radiant with truth, could possibly be picked to pieces and set out on a black-

¹ Quoted by Ginsburg, *op cit*, p 33, from Philo's *Every Virtuous Man is Free* (See also *Philo Judaeus*, Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library, vol. III, p 524.)

AS HEIR TO THE ANCIENT WISDOM

board in formulae ! Only his life and example seem to survive untouched by that deadening hand of doctrinal dictatorship, and, if we wished to sum these up in one word, that word would almost certainly be ' Compassion '. He has passed on the torch kindled in the distant past of the Ancient East and the light he gave to men was one that the humblest and least erudite could see and recognize as truth. The writer of the Fourth Gospel actually begins his book with the very words of Vedic teaching

Prajapatir vai idam asit In the beginning was Brahman
Tasya vag dvitrya asit With whom was the ' Word ' (*Vak*)
Vag vai paraman Brahma And the ' Word ' is Brahman¹

He sought to show that God, the Light, lighteth every man that cometh into the world, but that mankind did not always recognize the God in himself, but to as many as received that Light, they became the Sons of God. Jesus recognized that Light, and was the ' Word '. It is, indeed, as though the entire panorama of the testimony of the Wisdom of the Ancient East were focused to a point in his teaching, as though a spotlight from the Past were concentrated upon it and upon its message of hope to the present disunited and doubting world, sickened, as it is, by contemplation of modern mankind's insane inhumanity to man.

The Second Adam—the ' Son of Man ' as he called himself

¹ The Sanskrit words I quote from Sir John Woodroffe's first chapter, " Vak or the Word ", of his *The Garland of Letters (Varnamala)*, *Studies in the Mantra-Shastra* Madras and London, 1922. *Brahman* means the ultimate and supreme Deity.

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—proclaimed himself Son of God. That 'vision of the night' of Daniel's, recounted in the 7th chapter of the Book of Daniel, tells how Mankind—the 'Son of Man'—was ultimately given dominion in Creation; but, not until the fourfold cycle of manifestation had revolved, and the ten divisions of Time had been completed, did the Saints of God triumph over discord and disruption. The vision was no doubt treasured by the Jews, as were the others in this Book, because they saw in themselves the Chosen People, the Saints of God. Jesus of Nazareth, however, saw all humanity as the Sons of God, and perhaps he came nearest to feeling that his mission had failed when he was attacked by the Jews for representing himself to be the King of the Jews, the Jewish Messiah. According to John's Gospel, he made it quite clear that humanity—the Son of Man—and not simply one race must be "lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life". And then, according to John, came those words of deep understanding of the compassionate Father of the universe: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned. but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather

FAITH IN MAN'S DIVINITY

than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." This Son was Mankind.

When the woman of Samaria spoke to him of the promised Saviour, who, both Samaritans and Jews believed would come to them, Jesus, having already told her that God was not in the Jerusalem of the Jews or in the high place of the Samaritans (on Mount Garizim), but was a Spirit and must be worshipped by Mankind in spirit and in truth, and speaking always as the Son of Man who is therefore the Son of God, said: "I that speak unto thee, am he." He had told her that the water that he would give to his fellow men who thirsted for the truth would be a perennial source of living water in themselves which would be the water of everlasting life. It must be remembered that the more thoughtful among both orthodox Jews and dissenting Samaritans believed in a Messiah who, in the words of Dr Moses Gaster,¹ "would bring peace to the world and unite mankind in the worship of the one God". Jesus no doubt knew that the Samaritans based their expectation of the *Taheb* or Restorer on the words in Deuteronomy xviii 18, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren . . . and I will put my words in his mouth" ²

¹ *The Samaritans, their History, Doctrines and Literature*, p. 85 The Schweich Lectures for 1923 London, 1925.

² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

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The Messianic expectations of Jews and Samaritans developed in the atmosphere which, all over the ancient world, was becoming increasingly favourable to syncretistic religious ideas during the two centuries B.C. The more spiritual among the Jews thought of a Saviour who would unite mankind in the worship of the one God. The populace looked for a racial and a political deliverer. In either case this gifted people looked for a Saviour who should vindicate Jewish religious leadership of the world. I have sometimes thought that the great teachers of religion have come, always, where their particular emphasis on the central point of their own teaching was particularly needed. The unhappy result has been that, sooner or later, even the central truth of that teaching has been overwhelmed by the very failure to understand divine truth that the teacher himself sought to remedy. Jesus emphasized, specifically, the divine Unity and its necessary concomitant, the brotherhood of man. Yet his own countrymen declared that he made himself out to be a racial leader—and rejected him because of his universality—and the so-called universal Church founded by his followers set itself up to make of him a spiritual Dictator ! What crimes against the free spirit of man have been committed by that Church in his name ! There have always been some who have understood his message, or a part of it, and who have claimed freedom of spirit in matters of belief but have sought to show, by their lives, what he demonstrated by his, that the Son of Man is the Son of God, and that this divine unity is most truly manifested when *compassio*, ‘fellow

POSSESSIVENESS OF NOMAD HABIRU

feeling,' or 'suffering with' mankind as a whole is the direct fruit of the conviction of sonship.

The age-old feeling of unity that the dawn civilization of Mesopotamia expressed, philosophically, by its scientific rationalization, and poetically by its image of the universal Mother, was expressed with perfect simplicity by Jesus of Nazareth in the words recorded by John: "I and my Father are One" Let us forget, if we can, the sort of anthropological classification that stresses the importance of the difference between thinking of God as 'Father' and as 'Mother'. There may be a difference in the angle of the human approach. There is none whatever in the ONE, regarded as progenitor and creator. Inevitably nomads tend to make the effective head of the family the father. Almost inevitably nomads form a society that hunger makes predatory, that is therefore to some extent outcast, hence warlike. The Habiru, or Hebrews, before they came into Palestine, were such a people, though they obviously mingled with the population that had been there from prehistoric times. Although the whole of Syria, from the earliest times, had shared that conviction of the Sumerians that the universe was one, and that the single divine law animating and controlling it was the expression of the One in the Many, and although it had revered, as the Lady, *Allat*, the compassionate *Mother* of all: none the less, this Hebrew tribe coming into southern Syria, anxious to preserve its independence and distinctive character, emphasized all those characters in its own ritual and religious poetry that glorified

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the one God as the special leader, protector, and possession of the Hebrews. Any other way of regarding the divine One became to them an abomination. Their reaction against the *Mother Goddess* was particularly fierce. In consequence, even the most spiritually minded Jew came to think naturally of God as Lord and as Father, and, perhaps, to be incapable of forming in his mind the image of Lady, and Mother, without a sense of treachery to his own tribal religion. Thus early was exclusiveness woven into the spiritual fibre of the Jew to be his glory and his curse all through his subsequent history to our own day. Yet the remedy was offered by one of his own race, and utterly misinterpreted. So deeply did Jesus feel that he was Man—"Everyman"—that he quietly and simply insisted, again and again, that he and his Father were one. When the Jews stoned him for it, he pointed out to them that, in their own law, it had been said of them 'Ye are gods' when the word of God had spoken in them, and he asked them why they should then say that he blasphemed when he, too, claimed to be the Son of God. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not," he said, and told them that, whether they believed what he said or not, they ought to credit the demonstration of his deeds, which should testify to his sonship. "that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

All who, in these tragic days, doubt whether mankind can really claim to have anything of God should hope again when they read those other words recorded of him: "The

FELLOWSHIP IS UNIVERSAL LIFE

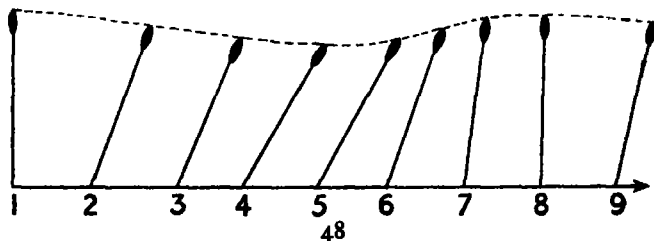
Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life." As parts of the divine Whole, men have a part in the creative expression of the Whole. They can accord with the divine Whole, or they can 'utter' discord, and thereby prevent the complete expression of the One in the Many, which perfect expression is 'everlasting life' because it is a realization of God-life, the universal life 'Doing the works of the Father', having *fellowship* with mankind—compassion—is in fact expressing the divine unity.

The consciousness of law, of *harmonia*, in this expression, seems to be the great contribution made by the very early civilization that flourished in Mesopotamia. The importance of that conception of taking part in creation, in 'uttering' the Word of the Divine Being, according to a law of music, might be guessed at, even if the whole thing had merely been a metaphor. When, however, the nature of the re-discovered Harmonia is considered, that law seems to me to be wonderfully inspiring. The scale of musical intervals within the 'octave'—itself a natural phenomenon with which we are so familiar that we forget to wonder at it—constituting this Harmonia, is a natural one.

Sound is the effect on the ear of motion communicated to a medium, such as the air, by some disturbance in it. Like light, it is one of the aspects under which motion is presented to our physical consciousness, but it is transmitted more slowly—about 600 miles per hour (through the air). It is transmitted, like motion on the sea, in waves. The

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characteristic of all wave-motion or 'vibration' (trembling) is an apparent forward movement unshared by the medium itself. You can demonstrate this *shiver* by slowly agitating a carpet. The movement of a float on the sea waves demonstrates that wave-motion has shape. Each completed pulsation occupies a definite period of time in travelling from one given point to another. Substitute an infinitesimal particle of water for the grossly visible cork and you will understand the statement that, during the time taken by an individual particle to perform a complete pulsation, the 'wave' (not the water) has moved forward one 'wave-length'. This is what is meant by 'periodicity'. Wave-lengths are variable but always in strict proportion—*ratio*—to the rate of vibration. The *rate* is inversely proportional to the corresponding *length*. Watch what happens to a field of standing corn when a gust of wind agitates it. The wave-motion or oscillation set up by the air behaves much as Sound behaves. The diagram below provides a visual illustration of the extent of vibration of each individual particle (here represented by the ears of corn) of the medium through which motion is transmitted, that is, of the effect of relative backwardness or what is called 'retardation'



MYSTERY OF THE OCTAVE

The constant amount of retardation between successive particles is *always precisely one-eighth of the period of a complete vibration*. When the ninth particle of a supposed row of particles is just beginning its forward swing, its situation in an imaginary line of waves is exactly where the first was. Beyond this 'octave' there is merely repetition.

Incidentally, the ancient Irish poem attributed to Amergin the Scer, preserved in certain medieval manuscript collections of allegories going back to the fourth century, makes use of this natural phenomenon, under the image of the "ninth wave", to indicate completion of one Time cycle and the beginning of a new one. This allegorical use by Celtic *filé* (professors of natural philosophy, poetry and music, sometimes known as 'druids') of a physical phenomenon inherent in the nature of Sound was probably a survival of traditional Eastern lore.

Sound, in its effect on the ear, is either non-musical or musical. The vibrations constituting non-musical Sound are not constant; in those the ear recognizes as 'musical', equal numbers of equal vibrations take place in exactly equal times, giving especial pleasure to the ear. The musical quality is thus a result of Number, and the great scientific discovery of the Ancient East was that Harmony—which is more easily analysed in the comparatively slow pulse motion of Sound than in any other natural phenomenon—is inseparable from Number. From this fact the Seers of the Ancient East deduced that the law of Number inherent in 'musical' Sound was the Law of the manifestation of the universe.

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What was this 'law of Number' that so impressed them?

You have heard the rise in pitch of the note as a started-up engine turns faster and faster. You may not realize that the scale of sounds is continuous—the 'infinite Harmonic Series'—if you have taken your ideas of pitch from a pianoforte, because the arbitrary scale to which a pianoforte is tuned is not merely a series of jumps of half a tone each, but is not even numerically accurate to a half-tone: it is 'tempered'. It is possible to measure the number of vibrations of any note in this Series per *second*, that is, in that sexagesimal interval of Time, measured relatively to the motion of the heavenly bodies, first detected, and standardized, by the Sumerians, or those from whom they acquired their civilization. Below the rate of 16 vibrations per second it is impossible for the ear to recognize the musical character of a note; 40 is conventionally considered the lowest note. The extreme range of the human singing voice, from deepest bass to highest soprano, is from about 50 to 1,500 v.p.s. Very likely in the Ancient East the ideal musical range was reckoned as beginning at 60 and ending at 3,600.

If some musical sound be arbitrarily chosen as keynote or source-note (Greek *arche*), certain other notes, having fixed relations of pitch with that note, form with it, and with one another, vibrational effects definitely pleasurable to the ear. This interrelationship is based on Number. It is the accurate numerical proportion—or ratio—of the intervals subsisting between the vibration rates of these "notes" that constitutes their physically appreciable aesthetic quality. The out-

ETERNAL PROPORTION

standing interval is the octave. The peculiar smoothness of the sounds made by the 8th, 16th, 24th and 32nd notes above or below any selected note when sounded with that note is appreciable to the least cultivated ear. This is the effect called 'unison'. The ratio of 8th to 1st note is 2 to 1. During one second of Time the number of vibrations made by the 8th is exactly double the number made by the 1st or Tonic. The musical quality of unison is therefore something in the realm of physics translated into the realm of biology which the mind of man again translates into the spiritual realm of intellectual perception of beauty. That is how we should put it. The Wisdom of the East would simply claim that there are not three realms but one, and that the self-same Law operates throughout the unity which to us seems multiple. Its wise men thought deeply about this number 8 and about the ratio of $\frac{2}{1}$ and came to the conclusion that the peculiar comprehensiveness of the octave must reside in some archetypal arrangement in the manifestation of Being. Within the limits of the octave there are seven arithmetically logical intervals that likewise appealed to them as archetypal.

The arbitrarily formed scales with which the West is familiar are built up from a series of eleven sounds (inclusive of the 8th note or natural octave) which, combined with the Tonic, yield the ten intervals of the major and minor scales, of which the most familiar are those known as the minor and major thirds (interval ratios of $\frac{6}{5}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$), the fifth (interval ratio of $\frac{3}{2}$) and octave (ratio of $\frac{2}{1}$). Our

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pianoforte scale has 12 equal semitones within its octave, obtained by sacrificing the just intonation of every single note. The result of this falseness is disagreeably magnified by the modern sensitive radio, and the effort the ear has to make to accommodate the confused harmonics is as fatiguing as is the effort made by the eye to accommodate itself to the unnatural frequencies of uncorrected electric light. Ultimately the justness of the ear's sensibility is blunted and it accepts false intonation as though it were true

The history of Music and of Philosophy alike tell of another set of ancient scales known as the Seven Harmoniai, the degrees of which, so the followers of Pythagoras, the Harmonists, taught, represented interval ratios that were basic in Nature, and, as Aristotle said, depended on "a number and equal measure". Strange as it may seem, this basis has been a lost secret for centuries, and musicologists who have specialized in Greek Music, including many Greek authors, have put forward various hypotheses, none of which have satisfied this Aristotelian condition, since none of them have been both mathematically and aesthetically logical. Attention was drawn to Aristotle's statement by one of the best known contemporary authorities on Greek music, who is also the leading expert in the archaeology and musical technicology of wood-wind instruments—the English musicologist, Miss Kathleen Schlesinger. She rediscovered the arithmetical basis of the Harmonia and has shown how this basis is automatically recorded in ancient reed-blown pipes when their finger-holes are equi-distantly placed and their

THE 'MELLOW PIPE'

distance apart constitutes an aliquot part of the total length of pipe plus mouthpiece. This is the obvious consequence of a natural physical law, but nobody else had happened to realize the connection—perhaps because they were not seeking it. Knowing where to look is half the battle in research.

Physicists have long known that for each musical note there exists a corresponding air-column of definite length that selectively resounds to that note, and the maximum resonance in a closed tube is produced by a note precisely an octave below that of the maximum resonance of a cylinder of the same dimensions with open ends. Blowing into a tube compresses the air and sets up an oscillatory motion consisting of alternate condensations and reactionary rarefactions (remember the shiver of the corn-stalks!), *their combined 'wave-length' having a definite ratio to the length of the tube or cylinder containing the air-column.* This broad physical principle underlies the complicated acoustical laws involved in the production of the simplest wood-wind instrument. Miss Schlesinger found that 'equal measure', as Aristotle put it, in the dimensions of the pipe or air resonator and in the distance apart of its finger-holes automatically yielded logically mathematical natural scales of interval ratios which, thanks to her study of all the relevant available ancient texts, she has been able to identify with the lost Aulos Harmoniai. This Modal system of the Harmonists was in use contemporaneously with the non-modal ditonal system from which the modern musical systems derive. This is how Miss Schlesinger describes it.

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The Harmonia among the Greeks was a sequence consisting of proportional, interrelated intervals within the octave, and the sequence itself was based upon natural law. Seven original Harmoniai may be found differentiated within the same octave, each having an individual and independent genesis from a common fundamental, believed to be *F*. Since these 7 Harmoniai are found differentiated within the octave *F* to *F*, each having the characteristic order of intervals resulting from its own independent genesis, it follows that there must be for the 2nd step, seven *G*'s according to modern nomenclature, all differing in intonation and bearing to the common Tonic *F* a different ratio. There will likewise be seven *A*'s, *B*'s, *C*'s, *D*'s, *E*'s fulfilling similar conditions. As a natural consequence of this, there will be seven different sequences starting from the same Tonic *F*, no two of which will begin with the same interval. The interval from the 1st to the 2nd step is, therefore, indicative of the Harmonia ¹

This sevenfold differentiation is unobtainable with tones and semitones only. The ear could fix these intervals, and the primitive piper could and doubtless did acquire the different modes by ear from his pipe or *aulos*; but it needed a highly educated person to discover the mathematical basis underlying these modes. It has been generally assumed that the theory of the Harmoniai (whatever it might be) was either a Greek discovery, or a secret learned by the Greek Harmonists from Egyptian mathematicians. It is certain that the Egyptian religious philosophy was an adaptation of an older religious philosophy borrowed from the Land Between the Rivers, perhaps through Syria. In their Return

¹ Page 2 of work mentioned on page 22

THE SILVER PIPES OF UR

or Rebirth of the Sun ritual, recorded in the *Book of the Dead*, the 7 musical notes uttered (chanted, or played on a reed pipe) by Thoth, the 'Word' of Ptah, the 'Heart' of the Creator-Maintainer of the Universe, played a prominent part. Miss Schlesinger assures me that the ancient silver pipes recently recovered from Mesopotamia afford irrefutable evidence of the use by the people of 'Ur of the Chaldees' of these Harmoniai. From my own study of the cosmological system of that people, as it is revealed in their poetical allegories, and based, as it is, on Number, I have no doubt whatever that the ultimate source of the religious philosophy of the scales of the Greek Harmonists was Mesopotamia or the as yet unknown source whence the Sumerians and people of the Indus Valley alike drew their culture.

The modal numbers of the seven Harmoniai, 'determinant' by reason of being, let us say, an 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, or 14th aliquot part of a string¹ (or segment of the soundbox of a monochord), also denote the member of the infinite Harmonic Series bearing the same number, because this Harmonic happens to be the fundamental note sounded by plucking the first aliquot part of the string. It is the *arche* or source of the series of interval ratios of its 'mode'. Take 14, which Miss Schlesinger has identified as the *arche* of the 'Mixolydian' Harmonia. Running up the ratios of the Harmonic Series to 14 on the F string (tuned to 176 vibrations per second) we get $\frac{1}{14}$. If, now, a series of

¹ Miss Schlesinger provides evidence from the Greek sources that these were the original 7 determinant numbers of the Modal Series

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exactly proportionate interval ratios be taken in the descending order, the result is a sequence of from $\frac{1}{14}$ to $\frac{1}{14}$. When this sequence is played in an ascending scale from the tone of the whole string ($\frac{1}{14}$) the flatness of *Arche* (which Miss Schlesinger indicates by writing E^b and describes as the known *Mese* of the Mixolydian Tonos of Alypius, which sounds very flat compared with the E^b of the keyboard) imparts its flatness as Harmonic 7th to every note except the string note and its octaves. I have used here the illustration given by Miss Schlesinger, on a string, because it demonstrates the logical sequence of the intervals of the Harmonia and also what it is that 'determines' them. Actually, in the aulos or pipe, it is the ascending Harmonia that comes to birth. This ascending Harmonia is a series of consecutive sounds beginning on the note of the whole pipe with holes closed. The proportionate sequence on a string begins with the note of the whole string as Tonic, and the scale can be built up by stopping each segment in turn and sounding the remainder of the string. In the pipe it can be done by uncovering each hole in turn while blowing through the mouthpiece, when that portion of the tube below the centre of the open hole is cut off from resounding and the resonance is obtained only from that portion from the open hole to the top of the mouthpiece. The scale runs up from $\frac{1}{14}$ or totality to $\frac{7}{14}$ or the octave above, which is half the length of the string or nominally, not actually, half the length of the pipe plus its mouthpiece. Thus 7th degree

THE SEVEN NATURAL SEQUENCES

was known to the Greeks as *Mese* and it is always one of the lower octaves of *Arche*. The relation between *Arche* or Source-Note and Tonic (whole string or total tube Note) in this natural gamut is reflected by the relation between *Mese* and Tonic and gives the characteristic modal interval of each Harmonia expressed by ratios consisting (a) of 8 or one of its multiples, and (b) of the modal determinant number, as follows :

Hypodorian	$-\frac{1}{8}-$	(F to F)	Unison or octave
Mixolydian	$-\frac{1}{8}-$	(F to E)	Harmonic 7th
Lydian	$-\frac{1}{8}-$	(F to D)	Flat major 6th
Phrygian	$-\frac{2}{16}-$	(F to C)	Perfect 5th
Dorian	$-\frac{1}{8}-$	(F to B)	Sharp harmonic 4th
Hypolydian	$-\frac{2}{16}-$	(F to A)	Major 3rd
Hypophrygian	$-\frac{3}{12}-$	(F to G)	Major tone

In every Harmonia, *Mese* is recognizable by ear as an octave of *Arche*. The scale itself has a double origin (1) in the infinite Harmonic Series, through the numerical position, in this Series, of *Arche*, the Source-Note, and (2) in aliquot division by that number. Much else logically flows from this, but our technical digression, though necessary, is already long enough. Those who desire to follow up the matter should go to Miss Schlesinger's learned book, on which she was at work for over a score of years, and which gives all the details a classical scholar, a musicologist, a mathematician, an acoustician or a musician might demand. She herself believes that the rediscovered Modal System holds the germ of the future development of the art of Music. Each of

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these seven Modes, having its separate acoustical character that is quite distinctive, imparts this distinction to any melody played in that Mode. So it is seen that the claims of the Harmonists were not exaggerated, and the stories told by Greek authors about the psychological influence of the different Modes are evidently trustworthy and based on scientific fact. Forty-nine sets of sequences grouped in seven Modes gives wide tonal scope. A fresh use of these Modes might indeed give us that something new, and physically satisfying to the ear, that the human mind seeks in musical language. It would not be atonality, but true tonality. When the new goes contrary to Nature's laws, it is always fatiguing, if not positively irritating. I do not think I am going too far in suggesting that the recent experimentation in two extremes of 'music', atonal chord sequences without melodic line, and a despairing return to the only half-assimilated primitive rhythms and sequences of African and Hawaiian traditional folksong, are symptomatic of the total loss of the sense of unity and logical progression that afflicts Western civilization to-day.

That which gave the Harmoniai their religio-philosophic importance was the demonstration they provided that *musical*—shall we say 'measured'?—Sound, in a special sense, was the utterance of the Divine Unity in the manifold manifestation we call the Cosmos. These inevitable sequences of ratios, forming constituent parts of a Whole, were the expression, in Sound, of *Arithmos* (Number) in a different sphere. They expressed the correspondences of equal

THE FLUTE-PLAYING CREATOR

measure and of number, as they occurred in Music, with equal measure and number in the domain of Space-Time. It was no wonder that the God *playing an aulos or pipe* (and in later times a side-blown flute) became the favourite anthropomorphic figure for the divine Creator, in cosmic poems for dramatic representation. Orpheus had his forerunner in India, and all such figures had their prototype in Mesopotamia. The popular representations of the Mother Goddess with her kithara (dating from the sixth century B.C. onwards) and of Apollo with his, were only adaptations, in which the reason for the aulos being the Harmonia-originating instrument was ignored, the theory of the seven natural scales having become an esoteric tradition. None the less, the natural scales themselves survived wherever "equal measure", as I have described it, was embodied in the pipe itself. Nor was it extraordinary that in the Ancient East the number 7, no less than the number 8, stood for creation—8 as a comprehensive Whole, and especially as a completed cycle, and 7 as the very expression of a differentiation that was yet contained within, and itself built up, a unity.

These Harmoniai, as embodiments of a fundamental law of Nature, could not but deeply influence the evolution of that concept of a Unity in which the One and the Many expressed a single Whole. The unity was seen to consist in some compelling archetypal law of Number in which membership of a Whole is not haphazard but inevitably proportionate. The 'parts' are essential structural components of the totality. The totality has no 'being' except

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through the expression of these parts, and the individual parts have no 'being' except by reason of their mutual relation both with the totality and with the other parts. This 'fitting together' or *harmonia* came to express for thoughtful minds the truth about the manifestation of the One, which they realized could only become manifest through its manifold character. It summed up mankind as it summed up all Nature. The responsible dignity of men's minds and wills was felt to consist not specifically in their differences from one another but in the variety of their characteristic individuality, thrown into relief, precisely, by their mutual relation and their unity as component differentiated parts of one Whole. Subject to this relativity, men's minds were free to will what they could, and to know as much as they were capable of conceiving, yet the *creative power* of each individual mind resided ultimately in its mutual relation with others, and with the ONE WHOLE of which each mind was a reflecting facet. It was freedom within a pattern; not pre-arranged, because 'pre-arrangement' was a Time concept meaningless apart from serialization, but a natural pattern. The Music that men could help to make, if I may so put it, was tonal, because only within the widely various tonal pattern could the individual note express its full musical value or have any meaning. The concept of unity, human and divine, became one that was rooted in a relativity mutually conditioned to form a pattern. That was why Ratio in the sense of proportion seemed to these early thinkers to be the very essence of divine power and

CREATION AS MUSICAL UTTERANCE

beauty. Modern science has revealed such inherent pattern-forming growth in the intimate structure of an atom, and in the crystal—which is quite likely to prove to be the intimate structure of all matter. Yet nothing in Nature transcends the significance and beauty of the demonstration of this inherent mutuality according to law in the Harmonia of musical Sound.

That the principle underlying the natural Harmonia was known to the civilization flourishing in Sumer and Akkad, and was there regarded as basic in the evolution of 'creation' considered as musical utterance, seems to me indubitable. The cosmic allegories of ancient Mesopotamia, and the allegoric personages of the creation drama in the Vedic hymns, strongly suggest it. The exquisiteness of such a law must have powerfully stimulated the imagination of those who first discovered it, and of those who fell heir to the knowledge. It practically compelled those who knew about it to take Musical Sound as the perfect expression of the difficult fact presented to man's understanding in what we know as 'creation'. It also made it inevitable that all worship should be done with measured or rhythmic words—poetry—and with song and instrumental music.

Once we are in possession of this key to the symbolism of religious poetry and art in the ancient East, from which Greece inherited so much, we find that it will unlock many doors that have been stubbornly closed. It gives meaning to the old Greek teaching about the harmony of the spheres, although late Greek explanations seem rather

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puerile. The peoples of Mesopotamia had noted the revolution times of the planets, and, although they erroneously related all movements through the Zodiac to the earth as centre, instead of to the Sun, they were wonderfully accurate in such time observations as they were able to make without elaborate instruments. Like Bode, they must have been struck by the relationship existing between the heavenly bodies. They did not know of magnetism: do we, ourselves, know very much about it? They did know of ratio, and I infer that they knew of the Harmonia. They were convinced that the same law of ratio that operates in those natural musical scales operated also, in another medium, in the heavens. Would Faraday have discovered all that he did if he had not been convinced that a universal law was at work throughout Nature? Or Newton? It is possible that the ancient thinkers divined something, here, that we ourselves have yet to discover. We know that the scientific knowledge of the Harmonia died out. The Greeks themselves propounded all sorts of other more or less arbitrary systems of scales, and theorized about them. And here I would emphasize the point Miss Schlesinger insists on, that her own attribution of the Harmonia and other musical systems to the Greeks signifies only that Greece alone of all the ancient civilizations left evidence in literary sources, such as treatises on music, and, more important still, perhaps, in a Notation. This evidence will always be comparatively readily available to the general public; Greek musical terms have been transmitted to us by medieval musicians, hence the

THE VESSEL OF RATIO

legend that it was the Greeks who invented these systems is likely to survive, and to deceive many. The Sumerian scientific rationalization of all measures, based on a religious concept of differentiated unity, also fell to pieces in later times when its basis was no longer remembered. In brief, they symbolized the created universe by the 'ark' of 120 cubits a side.¹ It had its actual counterpart in the cubed 'foot' or *gin* (*mana*, Greek *mina*) mentioned above.² It seems certain that the name 'mana' or 'mena' was derived from the Semitic verb meaning to 'count' or 'allot', from 'cut off', or 'measure off'. It was understandable, therefore, that this verb should be embodied in one of the many titles of Ishtar, the 'Lady' of Heaven, who was both manifestor of the God ONE, as Mother, and was represented by the planet Venus (because it was the precursor or herald of the Sun, the supreme symbol of the law of unity) as well as by the Moon, the 'Measurer' and Time-regulator. Understandable, too, that one of her earliest representations should have been a stone cube, *ka'ba*. From that cubic measure, as standard, Mesopotamia derived all her measures, including those of capacity and time, since the contents and weight of that cube, in water, poured out from one measured vessel into another—the origin of the water-clock—gave

¹ For description of the ark in an ancient poem, see *Semitic Mythology*, p 219, and for the goddess 'Meni', p 21, by Langdon.

² The rationalization based on the cubed foot is fully discussed in Lenormant's *Essai sur un document mathématique chaldéen et sur le système des poids et mesures de Babylone*, a lithographed holograph published in Paris in 1868

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them their measured interval of time. This in turn was related to the apparent diameter of the Sun and the Moon, on the horizon (which gave them their degree), and to the time the Sun took to accomplish its journey, or 'year', of 360 nightdays: lunar days, which had to be discarded, later, in measuring actual time, for solar days, in order to fit in those tiresome $5\frac{1}{4}$ extra ones! The numerical system, however, with its 360 nightdays, was retained, the so-called 'sexagesimal' system resting on multiplication of the natural number '10' (natural, because all counting must have begun on the fingers) by the number '6'. A great deal of jugglery with the properties of numbers was indulged in by speculative men as time went on, but a scale based on '10' and on '6',¹ dictated by practical considerations equated with reasoned thought based on the discovered existence of a unifying law, seems to have been the foundation of their system—solid and *four-square* as the cube and its six faces themselves

The playing with Number, however, was not entirely fantastic. Originally it had a scientific interest. And, through this rationalization, Number was actually related to other facts of existence, such as the motions of the heavenly bodies, and, as I have tried to show, the musical Harmonia. Who could tell how much else might also be implicated?

¹ Those interested should refer to Thureau-Dangin's transcription and translation of *Textes mathématiques babyloniens*, vol. 1 of the publications of the Orientalist Society, "Ex Oriente Lux" (Leyden, 1938), as well as to Lenormant's essay already mentioned

THE YANG AND THE YIN

That, one must suppose, was the starting-point of much of the numerical speculation, and also of astrology. Once such speculations were divorced from the scientific scheme out of which they were built they could not fail to lead to extravagances and fantasia. If, however, a sympathetic examination is to be made of the ancient systems of cosmology with any hope of understanding their symbolization, this foundation of number and measure must ever be kept in mind. For example, the manner in which the Divine Being, manifesting in Time, is represented by the tetractys 'Four', and in which Creation, as 'utterance', is represented by the octave. 'Six' and 'ten', also, are used as symbols for Time extension. The notion of even numbers as *yin* or female, and odd numbers as *yang* or male, is also quite reasonably based on certain musical facts connected with the octave ratios. 'Cubing' numbers, also, is seen to have symbolic force when related to the rationalization scheme. Any reader can work this out for himself. The Pythagoreans laid great stress on ratios. A study of the sequence of the rediscovered Harmonia ratios will reveal why they did so in the first place, and perhaps more convincingly than the explanations of the Neo-Pythagoreans.¹

¹ Philo Judaeus (Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library), "On the Creation of the World", is a good example of Neo-Pythagorean speculation on Number, the more particularly as he deals with it by way of Commentary on the Mosaic Books of the Old Testament, especially Genesis.

CHAPTER IV

MA-KHRU . THE VOICE AND THE WORD

ANY man or woman who is captivated by the order revealed in scientific study of Nature is likely, if the study be pursued, to come to his or her own conclusion that the universe is One, but the conception of an evolving universe as Music, which we owe to the Ancient East, brings something still more lovely into the idea, and, if we ponder the matter still further, guided by the genius of ancient Mesopotamia, the recognition of Compassion as inseparable from this conviction of Unity cannot fail to follow. Let us remember that there are several ways of giving expression to this conviction. The ancient East has made use of them all. Scientific rationalization, extravagant dramatic pantomime (possibly as fascinating in its day as our modern art of ballet), lyric hymns, symbolic ritual, philosophic statement, mysticism, poetic allegory, startlingly simple direct avowal as in the words : "I and my Father are One."

In ancient Mesopotamia the early conviction of unity, expressed alike in the scientific rationalization already mentioned and in the pantomime epics of Sumeria, became conventionalized in the temple ritual of the New Year festival that lasted eleven days. The favourite Sumerian

SYMBOL OF THE SPROUTING GRAIN

allegory for the annual event that testified to the ~~law~~^{law}, which was to them such a worshipful and awe-inspiring proof of divine purposiveness and benevolence, was that of the Great Mother, Ishtar (*Nina*, *Nin-an-na*, or *Innini*, in Sumerian), seeking her dead Son and Lover, Tammuz (*Damu* in Sumerian). Tammuz was not specifically the spring Sun or the sprouting Grain: he was the dramatized personification, the beloved pipe-playing figure who, in the guise of a good Shepherd, represented all re-awakening life, light, and warmth, whether in the returning springtime Sun, the growing Grain, the budding Tree, or the Embryo swelling in the ewes and cows in the fields. Hence he was regarded as a figure embodying the great regulating Principle that, in the daily sun, the spring equinox, and burgeoning nature, bore witness to the beauty and the kindness of the *Mother* principle represented by that other beloved figure, Innini, whose symbol star was Sirius (known to the Mesopotamians as the Bow Star), because its behaviour in the night sky provided an unfailing date reminder for another annual event connected with the perennial miracle of resurgence. Both these great figures of the allegoric dramas and poems were called by the name of the great Serpent-Dragon, *Ushumgal*, which itself was a figure, in the allegories, for the Formless Ocean in which 'Being', as it were, was latent, ready to be evoked by the creative Word.¹ Here were at least two ways of expressing the central idea

¹ For a discussion of *Ushumgal*, see Langdon's *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 122 (Oxford, 1914)

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of the cosmos as a manifestation of the One in the Many, of which the Mother symbolization laid particular stress on Compassion as of the very essence of Unity. The Wailings for Tammuz, the dead Youth, must originally have taken place in spring, although, in the course of ages, the festival, tied to the uncorrected sidereal kalendar, came to be held, by 2800 B.C., in the summer. When, in Hammurabi's reign, the New Year was shifted from the position in winter, to which it had gradually come round, onward to the new moon following the vernal equinox, the Tammuz Wailings were shifted to the fourth month.¹

Tammuz, in the type allegory, appears to have been born in a cedar-wood ark, or boat, and, in other allegoric rites, his dead body was sent floating down the River, the symbolism being a double one. From very early times, in this land enclosed between two great river floods, the Lord of the Sun and the Moon had been represented as sailing in a boat across the sky, just as, among the Vedic Aryans of the North-west Indian plains, the Lord of the Sun was represented as being carried across the sky in a chariot drawn by a pair of swift steeds—Sun and Moon. So the death of Tammuz could be represented as the departure of his dead body to the Underworld Waters, in his boat, or by casting grain upon the waters, since, in that riverain culture, as in the Nile Valley, seed was sown on land flooded by the River, which thus was regarded as the agent of germination. Ishtar's search for "the mighty hero with the flute, playing"

¹ *Tammuz and Ishtar*, p. 9 (1)

RETURN OF THE SUN

was beneath the waters, in the rain-clouds, in the grain sown in the mud-flats, and in the fields, and, finally, in the subterranean world of Not-Being—and this, at all events, at one period, took place at the time of year when Sirius disappeared for two months from the night sky.¹ Langdon found a tablet in the Istanbul Museum which gives a text of this epic, in which Innini, when she arrives there, appeals to the consort of Nergal (the planet Mars) to allow Tammuz to return, and in which this mistress of the Underworld (mistress, that is, for the immediate purpose of the story, which must have served as text for a rite taking place when Mars was not visible in the night sky) tells her that Innini's Seven Bridegroom Attendants, in the 'Rest Chamber', shall restore Tammuz to her. Tammuz, here Lord of 'the Seven', is awakened and Ishtar, who, in this liturgy, is both Mother and Spouse of the 'radiant' Lord, cries aloud: "In heaven there is light! On earth there is light!" and the text (perhaps chanted by a chorus) goes on to tell how, in his infancy, the Mother bore him in her bosom, in his infancy the 'Mother, Mother compassionate' uttered, in her bosom the 'sister, sister compassionate' uttered, in her bosom his spouse, Innini, gave him repose. Comparing this with another 'return of the Sun' ritual, in Egypt, the phraseology, here, strongly suggests that this was a musical rite, in which resurgence is effected, sacramentally, by the sounding of musical notes. The importance of this will appear presently. Innini, as the creatress, is the begetting Mother of the Sun

¹ *Ibid*, pp 15, 18

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and of the burgeoning springtide. Herself manifested in the 'Lady of the Night', the Moon, she is 'sister' to the Lord manifesting in the Sun; and, when the Lord, the Time Regulator, is manifesting as Sun and as Moon, regulating the surging tide of desire that leads to fruition in birth, himself stimulating desire, then she is the insatiable lover, his spouse, or even, as in other poems, the universal whore, giving herself to all in whom she creates the urge to create life, and restricting her favours to no one love. There is a sidereal reference also, in Ishtar's faithlessness, as her star deserts those lover stars with which it consorts closely for brief periods. The supposed inconsistency between these different aspects of the figure under which the Divine Being, as *Innum* the First Principle, is represented, is no inconsistency at all. No single allegory could represent the Divine First Principle in all the many facets of manifestation in 'creation'. The religious poetry of the Ancient East attempted them all. There was neither confusion nor contradiction, because poets and people knew that all these aspects concerned the One.

The music of the reed pipe—as of other instruments—was an all-important feature in the religious services, and, more particularly, perhaps, in the annual re-creation ritual, because, philosophically, the mysterious Sounds that were the 'words' of Creation—the 'Messengers' of the Creating Being in the pantomimes—actually were creation, by virtue of giving form to the Formless, and giving it, as it was given to the heavens, in measure, number, and vibration

“ *Σελήνην* . . . BUT MEN NAME HER *Μηνήν* ”

(or frequency). The cubed standard measure and the ‘musical’ note (musical in the strict sense of *mathematically accordant* sound-waves) were alike ‘forms’ in which the Formless clothed itself. The symbol of the Mother Goddess as First Principle was a cube. In dramatized poetry one of her titles was *Elteg* or *Nidaba*, the Goddess ‘Reed’, qualified as Nidaba of ‘Numbers’, and represented in the allegories as having *seven* hands and as creating *with her breath*. This philosophic notion of creativeness could best be depicted, for the populace, by the human birth allegory, and so one of the most famous Sumerian prayers to Innini, as the Principle of Unity and Law exemplified in the Time regulatory function of the Moon, closes with these words :

Divinity of begetting, divinity of procreation (?) thou art.
For ever thou exercisest love.

The Goddess was the very principle of the attraction which results in new life. We are reminded of the Greek allegory in which Eros is ‘the first of the gods’. And in a hymn of praise to Ishtar we read of her ‘love’ in another sense :

She is adorned with the light of days and months,
She, the merciful,
She brings light to the afflicted, makes rich the downcast.
Hear, O ye regions, the praise of Queen Nana (Innini),
Magnify the creatress, exalt the dignified !
Exalt the glorious one, draw nigh to the mighty lady.¹

¹ *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 60, 61.

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It is quite obvious, here, that the people knew that this dramatized figure, in which they worshipped the Divine Principle, was both exemplified in the regulatory functions of Sun and Moon, and was the cause of all that is, and obvious, too, that they recognized this Principle as being compassionate. Langdon gives many quotations from the Babylonian and Assyrian texts to prove that the people held her, as Creatress, to be not only just (in the sense of being the Principle of unfailing Order) but both bountiful and merciful, as, for example: "She that causeth the heart to attain its desire, who loveth righteousness, who hearkeneth unto prayer, who accepteth supplication . . . the bestower of life, the merciful goddess, to whom it is good to pray." And "Thou renderest the judgement of mankind with justice and right". She it is who harmonizes—or subdues—the gods who are unreconciled, she hears petitions and receives supplication; she is "the compassionate goddess who loves righteousness"; she herself is *Ninzida*—Justness.¹

The favourite Babylonian allegoric Creation pantomime replaced the poetical Sumerian figures of Innini (Ishtar) and Damuzi (Tammuz) with that of the demurge Marduk, conqueror of the dragon Tiamat—representative of the Ocean, Chaos—a popularization of the more closely reasoned creation symbolism in which the law underlying manifestation was represented by dramatic characters suggesting the great rationalization. It is this Marduk allegory that furnished the New Year ritual practised in the temple at

¹ *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 63-5

THE BOND OF LAW

Babylon, and many tablets bearing portions of the text of this ritual have been recovered. The pictorialization is different, but the meaning is the same: the Cosmos is the manifestation of the One in the Many, and the bond—literally the *markasu* or 'rope' (figured in art as a 'stream' conventionalized as twisted cable strands)—*tying it all together* is the regularizing principle of ordered relationship, expressed through number and measure in the serialization that is Time and in the spatial expansion that is the material universe. This principle finds its most obvious illustration in the motions of the heavens, particularly in the revolving Wheel of the Zodiac and the journey through its measured divisions by the Sun, whose beneficent return in the New Year remains, as ever, the key festival of the agricultural year. The figure of 'Marduk' now represents the Organizer of Chaos. It is he who triumphs over the Dragon of Formlessness and who brings the worlds into being, and it is the returning Sun, figured as Marduk, who represents, in concrete form, all the goodness and bounty of the maintainer of the universe towards the creatures inhabiting it and who are themselves an integral part of the Cosmos. The story had become so conventionalized in the ritual that keys (examples of which have been excavated) were necessary to explain how different actions in the now stereotyped ritual indicated this or that episode in the great epic drama. No key was required, apparently, to the inner meaning of the episodes in question. The epic drama had been so long familiar that its meaning could be taken for granted, and

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this, in our own day, has tended to lead astray such linguistic scholars, commenting on the ritual, as are unfamiliar with the idiosyncrasies of Oriental religious symbolism and as have been led to expect pure polytheism and idolatry by Christian theologians. Thus they have too readily assumed that a more or less educated Babylonian priesthood had been at work, rationalizing into the form of would-be consistent 'myths' and family trees a collection of superstitions really appertaining to a primitive demonology and to a number of fantasies conceived in the naïve imaginations of heathen worshippers of a plurality of gods in human and animal shapes. Where public worship is concerned, the tendency is almost always the other way—in the direction of fossilizing, in ritual, allegoric drama that was originally the creation of epic poets who tried, by their vivid imagery, to get the ordinary man to see that which the poet himself divined of the unique Being manifesting in beauty and order through the manifold operations of Nature.

In this famous ritual text, which must have existed in many copies, and beginning with the words *Enuma elis*, the opening statement has a curiously familiar ring. Dr. Langdon's philological translation of a difficult and uncertain text is necessarily hesitant and halting, but perhaps we may paraphrase it:

When as yet on high the Heavens had no name
And the Earth beneath was nameless,
And the (sweet) Waters beneath, the Source from which all
sprang,

THE ORDERING OF CHAOS

Had not yet begot them on (salty) Chaos,
And there was neither sea nor land,
And the gods were not yet named and brought into being,
Nor the destiny of ought was fixed,
Then the primal Pair were named, were made,
The Male and Female, and duly waxed in Time.

This primal pair, Lahmu and Lahamu, were the male and female principles latent in the Formless, and their names were those of pantomime figures, and of known art symbols, in the shape of composite beasts of the deep, suggesting the later 'dragon'. From them came another pair, 'more beautiful'. There appears to be some attempt, here, to represent that Four, which, in all Eastern philosophic cosmogonies, is regarded as the base of manifestation or 'Being'. Next there is mention of days and years—that is to say, 'Time'—*extending*. And then the Second Pair create ANU (= the 'First'), who equals the male of this pair, and Anu begets the Creator of Man. The gods are 'linked' together as brothers. They sing Tiamat, the dragon 'Chaos', is 'silenced'. Then comes some rather involved cosmogonic explanation, which Langdon evidently sought to reduce to a reasonable mythological order but which refuses to be so rationalized, though it might yield reason if a translator were to tackle it, not as myth, but as allegoric ritual. The sequel is that the created beings attack and defeat the Chaos out of which they were formed. From An, the First Principle of actual Being, proceeds the Sun of tenfold splendour, and the Four Winds. Eleven con-

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stellations take shape and appear to constitute the path of the Milky Way, represented by that composite dragon Tiamat which is the symbol of the Formless and all that lacks Order; and then 'Kingu', the dragon's male consort, to whom Tiamat gives the Seven Tablets of Law and Destiny. Her aim appears to be to cause the Eleven, under Kingu's leadership, to swallow up the created, to confuse, and to reduce all, once again, to nothingness, and, in particular, to quench Fire (the principle of the Sun). Marduk (known from other texts to represent Fire, Sun, Order), son of Ea he is called here—Ea being the creative Water principle here represented by the First Pair, later known as 'Oannes' (Sumerian *Enki*) and also frequently identified with Marduk—is chosen as champion: he is to maintain creation in being, a task for which An, the First Principle, is not strong enough. He is given 'kingship of universal power over the totality of all things'; he is told he may command 'to destroy and to make' and it shall be so. With the Bow Star, and the Crux Star as arrow for it, he with the lightning to go before him, and his own body a fiery flame, yoking the Four Winds as steeds to his car, and armed with the Whirlwind (or *Enlil*, one of the trinity An, Enlil, Enki), goes forth, and, with the net of his Father Anu, he enmeshes the dragon Tiamat. The actual reducing of Tiamat, the Formless, to impotence, is done by *blowing the Winds into her*—and thus, again, we get a hint of a musical sacrament whereby the sounding of musical notes on a pipe is equivalent to *bringing into being*. Of her upper part Marduk makes

A SACRAMENT OF MUSIC

the firmament, and he *paces* out the Heaven, and *measures* the waters beneath the earth, and sets in their places the three starry 'ways' of Anu, Enlil, and Ea—these 'ways' being the ecliptic, and the two bands of the fixed stars on either side of it. He arranges the Zodiacal stations through which the Sun must pass, and the constellations on either side. He fixes the course of the year, and measures off the 36 decans, and establishes the equinoxes, and makes the 'gateway' of the Sun (the stars between which the Sun rises and sets). He caused the new moon to shine forth and rule the night so that the days might be determined, and he gave the Moon his 'crown' (the dark part of the orb) and arranged just how it should wax, and he gave it 'horns' to determine its six-day periods, and half a 'crown' to determine the seventh day. He fixed the *sabattu*, for its 'completion', on the 15th; also the time when the sun overtakes the moon and marches beside him; its opposition, and its waning. Next he made Man (*Lilu*) from the red blood (*Damu*) of Kingu, consort of Tiamat and bearer of the Seven Tablets of Destiny, and decreed that Man should thereafter exalt the gods. He divided the attendant gods and put the 300 Annunaki of Heaven and the 600 Annunaki of Earth above, and the 600 Igigi beneath, and the Annunaki and Igigi made for him—for Marduk "who is Enlil and Ea"—an abode—the stage tower of Esagila at Babylon, posed on the 'Nether Sea' (Apsu, the male sweet water principle which, with Tiamtu, the Salt Ocean, is Father and Mother of Being). In passing, the actual ziggurat or pyramidal Tower of Nimrod, or

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Babel (Gate of El), was constructed in stages to represent the spheres of the Sun, 5 Planets, and Moon (at the summit), its measurements corresponding with those given (120 cubits a side and 120 cubits in height), in a text, for the cubic ark representing creation, in which the Mesopotamian Noah, Utanapishtim (or Ziusudra), escaped from destruction by the Flood Waters of Chaos. To return to the ritual: this dwelling built, the "50 gods" entered in, and *made music*, fixed laws and plans, also the position of the Bow Star—Sirius—and the other stars.

The ritual then proceeded to name the 50 secret names of Marduk. The first name was 'Verily his sonship is of the gods'. he created men and gods with the breath of life, and men were to pray to him in unison 'His heart is wide, his compassion brings warmth'. His Second Name was 'Musterer of the gods'. he allotted them their places. The Third Name was *Asaludug*, and he, the bright god, allotted the gods their *portions*—or, may we conjecture, their ratios? Some of the 'names' appear to be purposely cryptic, but there are some that are enlightening: *Asaru-Alim-Nun-Na*, intercessor, 'Light of the Father who begat him'. (The figuration of the Divine Being in this specific guise, a composite Fish-Ram, identified with Capricorn, is said to be the prototype of the Hebrew *Kerub* or cherub.) *Zi-Kug*, the 'holy breath of life', Lord of Mercy, who had mercy on the 'bound gods' and who created mankind that mankind might 'set them free'. *Mummu*, the 'Word', the creator. *Pagalguenna*, the totality of the Lords. *Lugal-*

MAN'S FREEDOM TO DESTROY

durmah, the leader, the lord of the unionizing band, the *markasu*.

The Epilogue to the Creation Epic is a prayer that the '50 Names' may be held in remembrance, since the 'First One' taught them. The epic, it is stated, is instruction which the 'First One' thought out in former ages.

From the often conjectural translation of the fragmentary tablets of this New Year Epic ¹ certain facts germane to our subject none the less emerge clearly ; others are only adumbrated. The Babylonians evidently thought of the Divine Being as ONE, and as manifesting in Creation considered as a continuously organic and formative act—which yet might be annulled, but which was held in being by a unionizing and regulatory law, the very operation of which constituted beauty, compassionate fellow feeling, and, I think we may fairly add, harmony. Mankind was a part of Creation, and his destiny, like that of the rest of creation, is to utter, or set free, the vocal music which this manifestation of the One sacramentally is, provided that the demon Discord (*Saltu*, in the allegory, the rival of the Creatress, *Innini*, who wars against Chaos) does not silence it, and that, to use the imagery of the Creation Epic, the dragon Chaos does not engulf it in her hungry maw.

The meaning of the Seven Tables of Destiny and of the Fifty Names of the Creator might have remained an impene-

¹ *The Babylonian Epic of Creation* Restored from the recently recovered Tablets of Assur ; Transcription, Translation and Commentary by S Langdon Oxford, 1923

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trable mystery but for the survival into Greek times of the seven Greek Harmoniai, with their linkage with the seven heavenly bodies, and their recent re-discovery. The Harmonia suggests that the 'Seven' are simply the interrelated *ratios* of the intervals between the eight musical sounds of the octave, which, in the view of early philosophers, provided such eloquent testimony to the unifying, organic Order in the Cosmos, not merely *operating in* manifestation but being its very essence, in that manifestation consisted in the musically uttered 'Words' of God, constituting, according to number and measure—the reasoned exponents of form—the Song and the Poem of all That which Is.

For the probable explanation of the 50 creative 'Names' of the Creator, which help us to understand the ancient concept of Unity, we can turn hopefully to North-West India. There survives in the Tantras an early religious philosophy rooted in a system out of which grew the Vedic hymns and, later, the Upanishads. That system may well have come into India along with the Indus Valley culture which had so obvious a cousinship with that of Mesopotamia.

In the Tantras there exists to this day an interpretation of the Fifty *Varna*, or 'Letters' of Kali's Garland, that certainly seems to have been originally rooted in the scientific Harmonia, which, as has been explained, was a unit in itself but a differentiated unity comprising 49 natural sequences of mathematically connected frequency ratios or musical intervals. The Voice—that most perfect of all free reed and resonator instruments—can sing these natural scales, and

THE 'SOURCE' OF DIFFERENTIATION

stringed instruments can be attuned to them, but it is only in the pipe, as we have seen, that the natural mathematical sequences of vibration ratios are born as an inevitable result of 'equal measure', so that they become, as it were, a demonstration, in a different category of phenomena, of equal measure. It is the pipe alone which thus proves the hidden unity resulting from the operation of this natural law. It was a natural exemplar of a unity that was and could be embodied only arbitrarily in the Mesopotamian rationalization already mentioned, in which a hollow cube of given size, weighing a given amount, a '60th' of unit, also contained a corresponding '60th' of water, which, when emptied from a vessel of that given capacity, at a given rate of flow, occupied a corresponding '60th' of time in the process, and which basic cube also provided the standard linear measure. In all probability, the vessel holding the water was also so shaped and constructed that, with graded amounts of water in it, it 'rang' the standard notes of the octave scale, or, at all events, rang the keynote—possibly one of 60 vibrations to the second, since a second is both a unit and also a 60th part. (This would be b_4 according to what is known as the philosophical scale, which is lower in pitch than our present standard of instrument tuning.) This rationalization, albeit arbitrary, was intended to demonstrate in practice a unity otherwise known to exist—doubtless from scientific experiment with sound vibrations and pipes and strings. If I may so put it, it was a scientific sacrament. The inner truth greatly transcended the visible declaration

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of it, but this was a sincere effort to harmonize outward expression with inward truth.

The theory of the *Varnamala*, or Garland of Letters, is very interesting, linking, as it does, the earliest known scientific study of the musical sounds of human utterance, and the esoteric meaning of *mantras*. It has been set forth succinctly, in English, by Sir John Woodroffe, in the volume in which he published his collected papers on the *Mantra-Shastra*.¹ This gives so clear an insight into the most ancient Eastern ideas of divine Unity, and is so little known, that I make no apology for detailing it here.

It is a peculiarity of Greek, Egyptian, and Sanskrit that in these languages there is a single word for that which we, in English, need two, the compound 'Voice-Word'. In Greek, *logos* implies both voice and word; and it also—and at an earlier date—carried the suggestion of reason, because *logos* was *ratio*. In Egyptian religious texts *Ma-kehru* (itself originally a compound) also means the Speaker and the Word spoken, the 'Voice-Word'. It carries, too, the suggestion of justness and truth having the force of law, of accurate relation between creativeness and the thing created. A holy man or saint, for instance, was such a *realization* in absolute veracity of the creative Voice. And this was the ancient Egyptian religious philosophy of the Pyramid period. It was echoed, later, in the Alexandrian Hermetic literature. Allegorically, Thoth was the 'Word' of Tum—Tum being

¹ *The Garland of Letters (Varnamala) Studies in the Mantra-Shastra*. Madras and London, 1922.

THE CREATIVE BREATH

at once the All and the Void, rationalizing itself in Creation, manifesting in Ra (the Light), the mystic Lotus emerging as a 'Name' from Nun or Chaos, and doing all this by virtue of Law, of Ma'at.¹ Thoth was the Golden Germ born from that Lotus,² and Thoth was the embodiment of the Just Tones. He abode in the City of the Eight and his Sounds were Seven. In Sanskrit the feminine noun, *Vak*, from the root *Vach*, to speak, likewise means both voice and also the word uttered. In Indian religious philosophy *Vak* is the 'Mother' of the tri-une expression of Brahman, namely Brahma-Vishnu-Rudra (later, 'Rudra' became 'Shiva'). The great Universe, the 'Cow', is *Vak-Virat*. The power (*Shakti*) or energy of the Brahman was *Vak*. She went out, from the ONE, Brahman, (as his 'Word') and gave a 'name' to, or produced, the universe of the MANY. *Vak* is personified as Sarasvatī—the 'flowing', the source of the inspiration of the poets of the Vedas, and the 'Mother' of that chief of all Vedic metres (associating the Six and the Eight), *Gayatri*, first among the Seven principal Metres.

Brahman, in 'uttering' *Vak*, expires the divine Wind or Vital Breath with the sound *Hang*, and again inspires with the sound *Sah*. *Hang-Sah* is thus the natural 'name' for the divine male-female 'Bird' which is the Vital Breath (*Vayu*) of the ONE manifesting in the life or existence of all

¹ See Alexandre Moret's *Mystères Egyptiens* (Paris, 1927), chapters on the Creative Word, and on the Mysteries

² For texts on Thoth, see *Thoth the Hermes of Egypt*, by P. Boylan (London and New York, 1922)

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creatures. They 'become' by reason of that mutuality of awareness of the One as Many in which subject and object are differentiated albeit still a unity. When the One Self sees itself as object, 'creation' is taking place. It takes place as a vibration or wave-motion which is Sound (*Shabda*, from the root *shabd*, to make sound) and which is the natural 'name' of the thing thus brought into existence.

Indian philosophers differentiate sound that is non-musical (*Dhvani*) from sound that is described as 'lettered' sound, or sound having meaning (*artha*); but only those *shabdas* which are natural 'names' for things continue for ever. The others are ephemeral. Vaidik language consists of those sounds that are eternal. The 'utterance' of Brahman was the lettered sound AUM (pronounced *Om*), and its meaning, object, or *artha*, is the total universe. From the supreme vibration AUM, which is the sound 'uttered' by the ONE, all Letters (*Varna*), and also all non-musical sounds (*Dhvanis*), issue

The actual sounds issuing from the human mouth are formed by the free vibration of the cartilaginous plates of the 'vocal chord' membranes in that perfect wind-blown 'pipe', the human throat, for which the mouth cavity (cavern) serves as resonator. These continuous sounds, piped or breath-blown by the human flute, are the vowels, differing in shape according to variations in the shape of the cavity. The consonants are interruptions of these sounds, which cut them, as it were, into lengths, but the consonants of themselves are dumb. So the vowel is the enabling power, or

THE THEORY OF MANTRAS

shakti, of the consonant. The *Varnas* or Letters are the sounds differentiated according to pronunciation, dependent on the place and manner of their production, as throat (guttural), lips (labials), teeth (dentals), and so on. These uttered Letters (*Varnas*) are made up into syllables and groups of syllables (*pada* or feet), or, as we say, words. From these, *Mantras* are made. Such an uttered sound is held to be the gross or outward naming of things thought and created by reason of being so 'named' in the subtle world of spirit. To 'utter' these 'Names' is to bring into existence the things they signify. Such *Mantras* are held to be the nearest possible human or material approximation to the ideal 'Name' of the thing to be heard only by the inner or spiritual ear. Hence, when one of these basic names are uttered—as AUM, HANG-SAH, RAM, or HRIM, the human being uttering it of set purpose is 'creating'—in the spiritual sphere—that thing. *Ram*, for example, brings into being the concept behind the gross or material 'name' AGNI, which comprises 'Fire', 'Sun', and 'Lightning', and all the things thought of when the Eternal and the ONE is conceived as manifesting in 'Sun', and in all that 'Sun' implies—including Order and Generation. The linkage between these connected ideas, approximating the serialization of Creation, is a relationship of order, as in metre, or as in the logic of interdependent musical notes (*chandrah*). So that the combination of thought, vocal utterance, and bringing into existence—or 'naming'—by means of stressed and measured causal Sound, is the re-creating, by Man, of

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something archetypal that was and is accomplished by the natural laws of harmony, which, as I have explained earlier, depends on the ratio of sound-wave frequencies one to another and to the octave scale comprising a sequence from first note to its doubling on the eighth note and providing seven intervals. The outward ear will hear only the rhythmically uttered 'words' or *mantras*. The inner ear hears—because the inner instrument of reason utters—the One in the essentially musical act of creation. Such is the Tantrik theory.

According to this theory as it is at present held in India,¹ we have, in these uttered sounds, the universal archetypal language of which the different tongues of mankind are but dialects, and to which Sanskrit is the nearest approach. For example, the sound 'Gauh', which is the Sanskrit for 'Cow', is the human utterance approximating the eternal constructive sound for the animal recognizable as the Indian female buffalo. The Tantrik considers that there are comparatively few approximate natural names which are fundamental sounds. He believes that certain combinations of these, according to a secret order—which he claims to be the order of natural harmony, although by that, apparently, he does not, now, mean the natural order of the Harmonia which is unknown to him, as is probably the mathematical basis of any kind of harmony—he believes that these form the universal Vedic 'language' of Creation. He believes that the fundamental sounds are the *Varnas* or 'Letters'. In the

¹ Woodroffe, *op cit supra*, p. 79

THE VARNAMALA

eternal order (*Krama*) of the combination of these *Varnas* lies their creative potency, for, individually, although any one *Varna* is as potent as another, each one containing within itself the Cosmos in miniature, they must be built into combinations if they are to become actively creative. The Tantrik holds that the physical vibrations of a single *Varna* may be resolved into component vibrations which are harmonic. (This, in fact, is a perfectly good description of what the ordinary person takes to be a simple musical 'note', as heard on any instrument, which is not a simple sound at all, but a fundamental reinforced by some or all of its accordant overtones up to the limiting octave) The linked Fifty of them constitute the *Varnamala*, or Garland of Letters. This Garland is worn by Kali, the devourer of Time, the horrific figure of Indian religious imagery which represents that part of the concept of creation that implies the rhythmic resolution into Nothingness of all that has taken 'form' by the operation of causal Sound.

These claims for the Vedic universal language cannot be substantiated in actual fact if the *Varnas* are merely spoken syllabic sounds equating the Letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. If, however, the *Varnas* were originally notes (or vibration frequencies) individuated actually as to seven of them, but as to 49 only relatively (by reason of their relationship or ratio to the seven different source notes of the Harmonia, a natural scale of logically graded parts existing within that natural group, the octave), and if they were considered as being produced by the free-reed 'Flute' of the human voice,

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why, then all the above claims are scientifically justified, and the analogy would be perfect.

We should then at once understand the logic of the symbolism of the 49 Vedic Maruts, those 'airs' that are the sons of 'Vayu', Vital Breath or Wind, which airs, in Indian Vedic allegory, issue from the 'Cavern' and reduce Chaos to divine order. Quite a number of the hymns of the Rig Veda support this interpretation. And the corresponding interpretation of much allegory, and of certain ritual scenes, in Egyptian cosmic religious philosophy, becomes, likewise, clear and logical. We should then, also, understand why the 'Tower of Babel', with its seven stages representing the Sun, the Five Planets, and the Moon, should have had attached to it, by the Hebrews, the allegory of the diversified languages of the human race, which certainly rested on something more rational than a pun. Indeed, the clue would seem to have been preserved for us, in a rather extraordinary manner, in the medieval Irish manuscript (a collation of older texts) known as the Ogham Tract,¹ where an elaborate attempt is made to relate cosmic creation, starting from the octave, to a kind of ideal philological grammar, and to prove that the Gaelic is one of the seventy-two dialects learned by seventy-two poet-seers, in a ten-year period, of the archetypal language taught by the Ancient of Days (or, as we say, Kronos) in the Tower of Nimrod. This was no historic king, but Nimrod the Hunter (grandson, as the Tract points

¹ Translated and annotated by George Calder · *Auraicept na n-Eces*. Edinburgh, 1917.

TOWER OF BABEL

out, of Noah—the Hebrew version of the Babylonian Ziusudra or Utanapishtim), who is, as we know from Mesopotamian allegory, the dramatic character representing the Sun chasing across the sky. In the Irish allegory the Tower was built by ‘Adam’s children’; *Adamu*, as we also know from Mesopotamian allegory, is Mankind, in Man’s character as Son of the Divine Being, who created him and gave him part of his own Logos with freedom to share in the continuous creative act. The actual tower or ziggurat at Babylon (or Bab-El, Gate of El, the Creative Being) was a pyramidal structure, in seven diminishing stages, the Moon stage being at the apex. It appears to have represented the manifestation of the ONE in Creation, especially as that One (whose sacred unit-number was 60, the unit of all the Mesopotamian measures) was externalized in the sublime order of the spheres demonstrated in such awe-inspiring fashion by the motions of the heavenly bodies. This actual temple, also, represented that ideal Cube measuring 120 cubits a side, of which the Mesopotamian Flood allegory tells, wherein Ziusudra saves creation from resumption into the Ocean, Chaos, by embarking representatives of all living things in his ‘ark’, which is the Cube, the basis not only of all Mesopotamian rationalizing of measures and weights but also the symbol of the Creatress Mother, *Innu*. The Jewish philosopher, Philo, who absorbed Alexandrian philosophy without ceasing to be a Jew, and who may thus be supposed to have inherited the traditional teaching about the Cosmos, not only of the Greeks (who got it from elder sources), but

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of the Egyptians and the ' Chaldaeans ', has a good deal that is interesting to say about cubed numbers, and the number seven, in his treatise " On the Creation of the World ", quoted above (p. 65), which is a detailed commentary on Genesis. He says, for example, that " Time is the interval of the motion of the heavens ", and that " there is no such thing as beauty in disorder ", and that " a man would not be far wrong who should say that in all these things there might be discovered that archetypal and real model music, the images of which the subsequent generations of mankind engraved in their own souls, and in this way handed down the art which is the most necessary and the most advantageous to human life ". Four, he points out, is the number of the cube, and speaking of the curious properties of the number seven, he points out that " in the seventh number increasing immediately from the unit in a twofold ratio, namely the number sixty-four, is a square formed by the multiplication of eight by eight, and it is also a cube by the multiplication of four and four, four times . he who begins with the number sixty-four, and combines them in a doubling ratio, will make the seventh number four thousand and ninety-six, which is both a square and a cube, having sixty-four as its square root, and sixteen as its cube ". Which, no doubt, is precisely why the sixty-four hexagrams of the Chinese classic, equated, as they were, with the motions of the heavenly bodies and the octave of musical sounds, seemed to Confucius to contain something essential which, given a few more years, he would have mastered—by which he

THE CHINESE HEXAGRAMS

meant he would have mastered, in the ' changes ' of the Yi, the secret of the universe.¹ All this may appear to be somewhat extravagant, but it is certain that intellectual men, such as Philo and Confucius, apprehended something deeper than mere ' numbers ' in the changes and sequences which were held to be musical. It is certain that they, and others of the East, saw, in the natural law of harmony, the verisimilitude of the relation between God and his universe, and between the integral parts of the universe as they are demonstrated in creation itself.

It is indeed passing strange that we should find, in this Irish Tract, the missing link binding together the age-old Mesopotamian idea of God and Creation as a differentiated Unity, of Creation as the manifestation of the *Deus Unicus* according to a divine order consisting in proportion or ratio,—and that other ancient Eastern idea of God and Creation as divine Sound issuing in vocal musical sounds connected together in a series of interrelated vibration sequences which are inevitable in nature, and whose relationship consists essentially in proportion or ratio. The seven graded steps of the Harmonia within the octave each give rise to a series of seven graded steps, theoretically 49 intervals in all, but, if we count each note in each sequence as an individual sound, and include the 8th note of the octave, they may well be the fifty ' Letters ' from which that divine creative speech can be built into ' words ' or ' names '. The

¹ *The Yi King*, Part II " Texts of Confucianism ", p. 1. Translated by James Legge, Oxford, 1899

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simile is just, because the Harmonia intervals in themselves are not music. They are the framework or acoustical grammar within which melodies are composed, and the individual notes, which receive their value from the mutual relation each bears to the completed scale determined by the first interval, are the bricks with which the tune structures may be built, while the particular mode lends the structure its special ethos. No note of itself is music. It becomes so solely by reason of its ratio to other notes within the mode, and hence by reason of its proportion to the Whole.

The genius of the devout thinkers who first realized that divine manifestation of the Unique Being *could be no other* than this vocal musical speech with its sublime law of harmony and its potentiality of exquisite beauty, is something which can only stir us to profound admiration. This man, whoever he may have been, was the world's arch-poet, the world's first great singer. The allegory writers all represented the demiurge as a musician, flautist, kitharist, or harpist, and the seers as both poets and musicians. In fact, as well as in allegory, the seer sang metrically, and the musician's music had a constructive meaning. In this idea of the Cosmos as Music performed by a Poet there is, first and above all, the profound recognition of the majesty and beauty of the One—the central Reality of which all else is expression, to which all else is relative, and, moreover, related proportionately. Then there is the clear insight into some of the deepest mysteries that have baffled human intellect. For example, the nature of the Real and the

THE WORLD'S ARCH-PORT

Eternal which, actually, is beyond our comprehension, but which is yet apprehended by us through this very relativity, in which we see the One and the Eternal becoming, as it were, graspable by our finite intellect by reason of that One's serialization as Time, and, through spatial extension, as Matter, which is Time's other face. For this serialization is governed by proportioned number. We are led to see the two great agencies of Time regulation, in the Sun and the Moon, revealing an important part of the essential character of the divine One. No wonder that the poetry of early mankind waxed lyrical in their praise as showing us the very countenance of God !

Yet there is more, much more, in this wonderful perception of how the One manifested in the Many. Our individual relationship to the One is seen as essentially a relationship of the Many to the One. We are part of the One, and no one creature is intrinsically of greater value than another or of lesser import, and each is a microcosm of the Cosmos. And yet there can be no harmony, no manifestation of the One, on our part, except in so far as our relation with one another is just, and there can be no creative music except as we play our part relatively to all the other individuals, and to the aggregate, in our just proportion, thus building up the sum that is God's Whole—a differentiated, harmonized Unity.

It is a particularly far-seeing realization of truth in that it accepts the differences arising from the individualities in all creatures and perceives that there can be no dead level of

MA-KHRU: THE VOICE AND THE WORD

equality, since that would not be music. The equal value, on the contrary, lies in the fact that each individual entity, by reason, precisely, of different ratio, is necessary to the complete sequence of the Divine Order that is God. Variety of melody there must be, as there is variety of Mode. What would existence be worth were it not so? The only dead level is non-entity, as the only sin is discord, disequilibrium. Why should manifestation take place at all if not to realize, by differentiated relation, the sublime beauty that is Music?

The genius who first perceived all this had no need to represent to himself the compassionate nature of the divine Being. It was luminously self-evident. The smallest sparrow was yet, as it were, the keystone of the arch. Every part of this Whole was of different value, functionally, yet every part was equally essential to its summation as a Whole. None the less, for the weaker brethren, this arch-poet gave to mankind his other poem about the Great Mother, because each one of us, whatever experience of life we may miss, has known what it is to be born of and to be dependent on a Mother, who, in the normal procedure of nature, puts the life and the well-being of her offspring before her own, and, in the higher forms of animal life, sustains her young, both before and after birth, with the very essence of her own body. That we might remember that the Mother image is but an image of a still more profound reality, the oldest religious symbolization of the Creatress pictures her quite as frequently with a musical instrument, the kithara, as it does with a babe in her arms.

CHAPTER V

CHANDAS THE POEM

WITH these ideas—perhaps new to many readers—of what divine Unity and divine Compassion meant to the very ancient East, we can turn again to look with fresh eyes at some of the attestations of their conviction by ancient Eastern poets. When we understand the solid ground for their conviction of divine Unity and Compassion, their poetry may bring to us fresh inspiration in these tragic times when faith in the essential kindness of our divine *fons et origo* is apt to waver as we experience ever more frightful examples of man's *inhumanity* to his fellow man. Those of us who still believe in the ideals of Religion and of Humanity have ourselves too often forgotten that man's unity with God can be realized only if he first attunes his relationship with his fellow man to the divine keynote. Any purely egoistic and possessive 'unity' with God, envisaged as the divine Thou, and which remains oblivious of Them—of Mankind—is an illusion born of the emotions, a Narcissus-like enjoyment of self, imagined as God. In it there is no *compassio*, but only the greed of lust. There is a psychological desire to be first, and to dictate, that may be as destructive in the spiritual sphere as is the arrogant determination to dominate, so patent, to-day,

CHANDAS: THE POEM

in the racial and political spheres. Such tendencies run through humanity like an epidemic or a prairie fire. They may appear, blatant and unashamed, as a political creed, in one community, and, in another, seemingly immune, may be disguised under the cloak of an individualism so self-evident that the malady—human egoism—is not recognized for what it is.

If humanity is indeed a unity,—as belief in divine Unity would imply—then those dwelling in one country or age can hardly isolate themselves arbitrarily from those living in another. Humanity, as a whole, must be responsible for the onset of that psychological sickness that is openly attacking so large a portion of it. We cannot begin to pluck out the mote that is in our brother's eye until we have made sure that there is not a beam in our own eye. "Physician, heal thyself" is a prescription that must be taken by Everyman believing in the divine unity, and, therefore necessarily, in the unity of mankind. The experience of the Past is valid, more particularly if we realize, with the Ancient East, that Past-Present-Future are but three facets of a prism through which the light from a single source reaches us in variously coloured rays. Vedic India likened this serialization of experience to the Three Steps taken by Vishnu.

In the Present, and especially in the West, there is doubt, division, wavering, distraction, and hesitation. In the Past, in the cultured East, there was this strong conviction of unity and compassion, which, if it failed to issue in a perfect civilization in the once barbarian West, is at least as much our

THE LOST IDEAL

fault in the Present as it was the fault of our more civilized fathers. We hope, to-day, to build a saner and a sweeter civilization of the Future. Let us seek wherein we ourselves have failed to make the promise of the Past come true. The promise was given in all art, philosophy, religious symbolization and allegory. The frustration, maybe, is in our present disregard for honest imagery, and for constructive cultivation of the soil, and in our concentration, instead, on mechanical short-cuts to living, and on meaningless exhibitionism. Our Adam's chance was to create things by patiently making them grow. Have we chosen, instead, the soothsayer's magic wand—and illusion? Have we forgotten the art of melodic line, based on the sure sequences of the Harmonia, and lost ourselves, instead, in a noisy chaos of atonality miscalled harmony? Have we thrown away balance, the basis of rhythm, and experimented, instead, barrenly, in jerks, discordances, and disproportion? For harmonious biologic constructiveness, have we substituted the swift and blasting chemical destructiveness of the high-explosive bomb? Have we lost a once recognized ideal? Are we wandering away from the path of human progress? Each one must answer such questions in the quiet of his own mind. The Past at least supplies us with an intellectual measuring rod.

This is how the Divine Being, manifesting in Creation, is apostrophized in Hymn LV, Book 6, of the Rig-Veda Collection :

CHANDAS : THE POEM

Thy secret Name none may behold nor grasp.
Before the firmament was formed
Thou providedst, for the maintenance of the Universe,
Earth and Heaven, and thou gavest light to sky and seas.
Mighty mysterious Name, object of all desire,
With it thou has engendered the Past,
With it thou will engender the Future
From of old, Manifested Light,
Beloved of Indra, into whom the Five,
Rejoicing, are resumed
He has fulfilled Heaven and Earth,
And the Firmament between
He beholds himself in the varied aspects
Of the Five Orders of Being
In the Seven classifications,
And their due Order, the Thirty-four
Shining with a single light
Through many and mysterious rays

And in Hymn CXXIX, of Book 6, Creation is thus envisaged :

There was neither existence nor non-existence
The world was not, nor the firmament, nor heaven above
How could 'Form' be, or where ?
Of what, enjoyment ?
In the beginning was Chaos, the unplumbable Sea.

Death was not, nor life, neither was the day measured,
Nor the night THAT, unique, uncreate,
Created by his own power
Nought was, but THAT

THE VEDAS AND 'TAO' THE COURSE

Darkness upon darkness heaped, in the Beginning.
All was unindividuated Water
The void, with its mantle of nothingness,
Was transformed by the power of will
That things should be.

In the beginning was the Wish, Mind's first seed
Seers, by their thought, have seen in their wisdom
How Being is linked with Not-being.

Their light, radiated, laterally,
Downward, upward, some rays procreated,
Some were mighty, some gave nourishment,
Others nourishment obtained

Who can truly know? Who, in this world, may tell it?
Whence was creation, Whence came it forth?
The Gods themselves were created,
So who can tell whence all came?

He from whom creation grew, unfolding,
It is his to sustain or to cause to cease,
He who orders it in the height of Heaven,
He alone knows, none other can speak it.¹

The Vedic hymns were probably composed during the eighth to fourth centuries B.C. About the third century B.C. a Chinese poet put the matter thus, seeing the harmonizing Law as *Tao* :

¹ These paraphrases are my own. I have used the version and glosses of H. H. Wilson and his successors in the six-volume edition published under the auspices of the East India Society, 1866 (2nd ed.) to 1888.

CHANDAS : THE POEM

Before Heaven and Earth were
There was that which was naught and yet entire
Not rippled by Sound, or clothed in Form ,
Changeless and inexhaustible
All-sufficing and all-pervading,
We may say that this was the Mother of All
I know not its Name
I call it *Tao*, the Course,
And, if I would further define it,
Teh, the Power that indwells,
Mighty and ceaselessly flowing,
The tide that surges, and returns to its Source at ebb
Tao the flux is all-enabling ;
Heaven [the *yang* principle] is all-enabling ,
And Earth [the *yin* principle] is all-enabling
In the Universe this Power is fourfold,
On Earth one fourth part prevails
Heaven's law is founded in Tao, the Course,
And the Tao is—that it Is ¹

Compare with these the first chapter of *Genesis*. Here are the six intervals between the creative 'words', and completion on the seventh day. As Philo says ²: "after the whole world had been completed according to the perfect nature of the number six, the Father hallowed the day following, the seventh, praising it, and calling it holy For that day is the festival, not of one city or one country, but of all the earth ; a day which alone it is right to call the day of

¹ Paraphrased from the translations of the *Tao Tih Ching* by James Legge in the Sacred Books of the East Series, and *The Way and its Power* by Arthur Waley

² *Op cit supra*, xxx

A MISUNDERSTOOD TRADITION

festival for all people, and the birthday of the world. And I know not if any one would be able to celebrate the nature of the number seven in adequate terms, since it is superior to every form of expression . . . it is divided first of all into the number One, and the number Six ; then into the Two and Five ; and last of all into the Three and the Four. And the proportion of these numbers is a most musical one. . . . The number Seven alone is contemplated in no part . . . it is called the perfecting number . . . the source of that most beautiful diagram which describes all the harmonies . . . the kithara with seven strings, bearing a proportion to the assemblage of the seven planets, perfects its admirable harmonies . . . the vowels are seven in number . . . and gave letters their names . . . the tones of the voice are seven." But Philo the first-century Alexandrian did not himself seem to know in what the Harmonia actually consisted. It was an imperfectly understood tradition that exercised its power over his imagination and he would probably have needed to be present at the nightly ceremony of calling the Sun back to life by the utterance, on a pipe, of the seven Tones, in an Egyptian temple, to obtain enlightenment. There was, in fact, nothing inherently sacred or powerful about any number *qua* number. The wonder lay alone in ratio—in the balanced relationship of the Many to the One, and in the mutual relation of each to each, and all to all. Such ratios do, as scientists can tell us, govern all manner of harmonies in the cosmos, and in the intimate cellular biology of every living thing. It is their mutuality, and their func-

CHANDAS : THE POEM

tion of producing, as a whole, or as related parts, a harmonious manifestation of beauty, that lends them importance and meaning. We seem to have to go back beyond Philo's time to find realization of this. He lived in an age whose dire need of help produced Jesus of Nazareth, with his simple re-statements of Man's human relationship to his Father, and to his brother.

The sixth century before Christ had its dire needs, too, and, in addition to the—shall we say synthetic personality of 'Pythagoras'?—it produced the Indian prince who left his throne and kingdom to go out into the highways and hedges to experience the sufferings of his fellow men and to try to bring sympathy and kindness into their lives. It is a curious thing that such a life as his should have become the historical base on which theologians erected a philosophy that, ultimately, is egoistic, since, in its classic form, it seeks first the subtlest kind of satisfaction of man's personal spiritual needs by depriving him of the urge of desire. In effect, it preaches a spiritual dogma of "each man for himself!" There can be an exquisite egoism in which the 'I' seeks to escape the consequences of the ego. It is not unknown in official Christianity. As Buddhism slowly spread into Central Asia and up into the Extreme Orient, the need again produced the men. There is nothing more lovely in sculptural art than the idealized portraits of Buddhist Bodhisattvas produced under the stimulus of Greek sculpture's marriage with the divergent Asian Mahayana religious philosophy. Kmer art, and the art of the Central Asian cave temples,

THE COMPASSIONATE BODHISATTVA

lights up a beautiful episode in the intellectual history of humanity. These saints are traditionally supposed to have been men who had almost reached the stage of complete selfless union with and absorption into the Absolute, with the implied obliviousness to human suffering and enjoyment, and to the world at large, when they held back, drawn by their compassion for their fellow men, and remained in, if not of, the world, that they might help them to a like realization of freedom from the bonds of selfish desire which to the Buddhist seemed inescapable in the world of conscious being

No artist, I think, could have created those portraits of Buddhist saints out of his unaided imagination. Such men must have existed and their goodness and sweetness of character must have inspired the artists. In some of these statues the artist, thus inspired, has translated the inner beauty of the man almost too completely into bodily beauty, and the result has been an admirable work of art rather than an authentic portrait of a saint. In others the whole statue has been subordinated to the beauty of expression in the face of the saint, and, in these, I think we have an authentic revelation of what that saint's religion meant to him. There is one Kmer head of a Bodhisattva that is so complete a revelation of the love and peace of the saint it represented, which has so completely captured and inspired the sculptor, that his portrait seems to live. It is in the possession of that whole-hearted art-lover, Eduard von der Heydt, Swiss citizen, to whom, I think, it is more a witness to the truth the

CHANDAS : THE POEM

Ancient East learned to know that an object of art. Perhaps I can best transmit the message of that saint of long past centuries by quoting some lines I was moved to write about him after I had had the privilege on several occasions of passing many quiet moments alone in his company on a quiet Swiss hill-top, while the storm-clouds of War were already gathering on the horizon beyond my view.

LINES ON A KMER HEAD AT MONTE VERITA, AUGUST, 1938

Bodhisattva . . 'saint' . . one who stays, in human form,
Compassionating us, to help us live
As what we are—the image in the pool
In which, reflected, shines the Face
Of the great 'To Be'
When the Word goes forth—'I AM'
How difficult to see the Face, in you and me,
In us, and them !
How brokenly the music of the Word
Disturbs the silver surface of the silent Pool !
What strange mystery ! Can the Creator, then,
Not create ?
Alone, unaided, is the Power powerless
To realize Desire's will ?

As a son goes, separate, out into the world
To choose, alone, his path -
As spindrift blows, or mist on mountain tops,
Or thustledown, light, on straying airs,
Lifts, and, errant, floats above the summit of the hill,
To fall, perversely, where the soil is spent—
So, the creative Power, launching the Word,

THE GENTLE JEST OF DEATH

Incompletely operates, depends on you and me,
On us and them, to grow and know
And be the vehicle of Truth.

And sorrily we fail, suffer, and desecrate our minds,
Unreconnaissant that we are, indeed, God's Face
Yet there are those who sought, and saw, the Light
And might have left us, stumbling on our solitary way,
Who stayed, and let us glimpse the Truth
That they have known, compassion overcoming ardent will
To go and be at rest in bliss,
In conscious knowledge that the seed and flower,
The tree and fruit, are ONE

Bodhisattva, with the lovely smile,
You knew the Truth, the gentle jest
That Kali, from behind her fearful mask,
And Gorgon, with her horrifying grin,
And Sphinx, and Durga, enigmatic, hide
From frightened man, testing him, as, on an anvil
Iron is hammered till 'tis tempered hard
With your smile the curtain's lifted,
And we know that we, as you, may find our way
To blissful knowledge of the ONE.

Such perfect accord with God, shining in these men's
countenances, smiling gently at the world, can only have
been attained because they identified themselves, first, with
erring, doubting mankind, whose good they placed, un-
hesitatingly, before their own. To my mind, the loveliness
of some of these portrait statues, breathing this divine message
of compassionate fellowship as the very essence of their unity

CHANDAS : THE POEM

with the One, is worth the whole history of Buddhist philosophy. In a way, it confounds it. The humble Bodhisattvas illustrate, rather, those simple sentences attributed to Jesus :

“Blessed are the merciful ! Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father . . . Give to him that asketh . . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you—that ye may be the children of your Father . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

Before the Buddhists adopted it, the Indians had a concept embodied in the divine personality *Avalokiteshvara*. As Kwanyin, so-called ‘Goddess of Mercy’—though, more truly, the survival of the older Great Goddess adopted and officially transformed by the Buddhists—the Chinese Buddhists have made of this concept the central figure of their religion. Despite the various Sects that religion is largely a mixture of the ideas of the Taoist poets, the Confucian moralists, and the Buddhist philosophers, superposed on a surviving cosmic faith, older than all these, that relies on the unity and compassion of the divine Being and is conscious that manifestation of the One takes place in the Light and Warmth and Time-regulating functions of the Sun and in the annual Re-birth of spring. To-day, through suffering and self-abnegation, Compassion is being born again in China, and a new humanism, founded in the conviction of divine unity, is emerging.

KINDLY LIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE

Kwannon, in Japan, shares popularity with Amitabha, or Amida, and, again, her older character seems to survive and shine through the strictly Buddhist presentation, just as Amitabha's older character shines through the sectarian presentation. As Boundless Compassion, Avalokiteshvara the Bodhisattva speaks to the heart of the people of the Compassion of their Creator rather than of the doctrines of a Buddhist sect. As Boundless Light, Amida the Bodhisattva speaks to the mind of the people of the manifestation of the One in profound Intelligence and in the light and warmth of the Sun, his minister, and of all the stars of heaven. Did they but recognize it, Amida and their own native Shinto figure of the Sun Goddess are but two anthropomorphizations of a single religious concept. The Sun Goddess steps straight out of one of those religious pantomimes which I have described earlier, and which deals with the same double theme of Creation, and the annual rebirth of the Sun, as the Babylonian Creation Epic, but it is an allegory that survived to a much later date, for it was written down, as a recollection of slightly varying texts of one script or 'book', in the seventh and eighth centuries of our era.¹ Buddhism, as a foreign importation from Korea, and ultimately, from China, had then long been established in Japan, along with the arts and elegances of China's older culture,

¹ *Ko-Ji-Ki* or 'Records of Ancient Matters', translation by Basil Hall Chamberlain (2nd ed., 1932, Kobe, Japan), *Nihongi*, translation by W. G. Aston (London, 1896), *Kogoshui*, translation by G. Kato and H. Hoshino (3rd ed., Tokyo, 1926)

CHANDAS : THE POEM

sweeping through court circles with the fascination of a new philosophy that seemed more learned and spiritually adult than the half-forgotten teaching of the cosmic allegories, presented in the guise of ballets that had grown stiff and meaningless in the hands of hereditary court functionaries more anxious to preserve, scrupulously, a traditional performance than to trouble about the meaning of the text and choruses. When the incipient revolt against Chinese tutelage came, these texts were gravely put forward as the opening chapter of a national history, and state records were added on to them. State and people have always clung to their Goddess; the educated classes remained faithful to Buddhism. Finally a composite popular faith emerged, having elements of Shinto and Buddhism—but beneath it all persists something older than Buddhism, something older than the official Shintoism of the State.

In fact, the religious experience of the entire ancient East is permeated, through and through, with the old cosmic philosophy and with the recognition of the Sun as one of the most beautiful manifestations of the divine Being, and never-failing witness to the ultimate Compassion. At the time of the great earthquake and fire, in Tokyo, a Japanese friend sent me an account of a group of burned people going into a small and shallow lake in a park, kneeling in the water up to their necks, in the vain hope of avoiding the furnace of heat. All, in the end, were licked up by the devouring flames that shot out over the surface of the pool. Quietly and in rhythmic unison, their voices gradually fading as life

KNOWLEDGE SPELLS HAPPINESS

ceased, they called on the name of Amida—*Namu Amida Butsu*!—not frantically, in hope of a last-minute salvation from a terrible death, but with faithful resignation, attesting to the last their conviction of the compassion of the Great Being to whom they were rendering up their existence. It was a deeply moving picture, and my friend's whole life and religious outlook were profoundly influenced by what he saw of human suffering, and human faith, that day. Enamoured of some of the more mystical teaching of Buddhism, from that time forward his understanding of the meaning of the life of Jesus seemed to deepen, for, of all the teachers the East has known, his conviction of divine unity has been the deepest and has been expressed the most simply; but in his life he was the true Bodhisattva.

If this ancient Eastern ideal of divine Unity and Compassion was so compelling in its influence on men's thought, has it helped mankind at all to face such problems as warfare and inflicting death in a just cause?

As a problem it does not appear to have arisen in the very ancient East. Men feared death then, as now, but they did not seek to avoid it at all costs. In recent years the archaeologist's spade has brought definite confirmation of a practice of which historians in Greece, in China, Korea, and Japan, have all spoken, and which Roman writers have mentioned as being known among the Celts. This was the voluntary accompanying of a dead master, or husband, to the grave. In Far Eastern history it is mentioned as a cruel practice which a humanitarian prince put down, so that there, at least, it

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had become a rite which was dreaded and which therefore offended the conscience of the community. In Mesopotamia the archaeological evidence indubitably supports the classic writers who said that the practice was genuinely voluntary. The royal chieftain, there, was followed into his tomb by his entourage, where they died, apparently without struggle, and decorously. Perhaps they took some stupefying drug that saved them from the physical horror of suffocation. The conviction of unity with the One must have been strong in those people, for they would appear to have been content to know their own earthly lives ended when that of their royal master was due. It is only when men are unhappy, or grievously suffering, that they willingly cut short their lives, unless they are urged thereto by one of three strong motives : to give their lives for others ; faith in a personal and individual resurrection in a better world than this ; or an intellectual acceptance of the fact of divine Unity which they realize as being a state of 'being' of intrinsically higher value than that which they experience in this limited life.

In the famous Sanskrit poem, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, 'inlaid into the ancient epic at a period later than that of the original *Mahabharata*', as its most famous English translator, Sir Edwin Arnold,¹ puts it, probably about the third century A.D., there is a beautiful answer by Krishna to Arjuna when he hesitates to slay his fellow beings on the eve of a just fight. This, I think, summarizes fairly the attitude of an older East

¹ *The Song Celestial*. Edition of 1905. London.

PROBLEM OF WAR AND KILLING

to this particular problem. In the paraphrase that follows I have used as my basis, not the blank verse of the English poet, but the close translation of Sri Aurobindo and Anilbaran Roy, hoping in this way to make a new, and perhaps more intimate, approach to the unknown Indian poet.¹ He wrote in the Vedic metre *Anushtubh*. Krishna, a personification of the Supreme Being, is represented as acting as charioteer to the Prince. I have begun at Versicle 16, Book II.

THAT which indeed is, cannot cease to be,
As that which is not, cannot be
The seers of Truth saw and knew
The resolution of this 'being' and 'not-being'

Know that THAT which for ever is,
Serializing this seeming,
Dies not
Who can slay the deathless 'I AM' !

Corruptible bodies come to their end ·
THAT to which the body belongs, which body uses,
Is without time, limit or corruption,
Bharata ! Then boldly fight !

He is in error who says THAT slays ,
He is in error who says THIS is slain
THAT slays not,
Nor is THIS slain

¹ *The Message of the Gita* (as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo), edited by Anilbaran Roy London, 1938

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THIS knows not birth or death,
Nor does it become in Time, and then pass away.
It is not born . it Is from of old ; it Is for ever.
It is not slain when body is slain

He who knows THAT as sempiternal BEING
How, Partha, can such an one slay it ?
How can he cause that it should be slain ?

BEING that is manifest
Divests itself of manifestation
And manifests anew
As a man casts away a garment and puts upon himself another.

A sword cannot sunder it
Nor fire burn it
Nor water quench it
Nor air blast it

It is not to be sundered
Neither burned nor quenched nor blasted ;
It is for ever equable, immovable, pervasive .
It is, for ever,

It is not manifest : it is not by the mind conceived ;
It is not subject to change—thus say the Veds
And the Upanishads inspired
Why shouldst thou then feel sorrow, knowing it to be thus ?

If to thy thought THIS seems yet to undergo
Birth and death, and death and birth, and birth and death again,
Why shouldst thou sorrow, O strongly-armed one ?

THE ETERNAL 'I AM'

That which is born is born to die
And that which dies dies to be reborn
As the sparks fly upward
Is the universal Law just cause for grieving ?

In the beginning beings are not manifest,
Then are they made manifest,
And in dissolution they are again unmanifest
Is this matter for sorrow ?

We regard and speak of THAT as wonderful beyond our understanding
Since with all our diligence to learn from those who know
None has ever known the One and Absolute

THIS that indwells in the body of us all,
O Bharata, for ever Is, and cannot be destroyed
Therefore grieve not for any thing
That comes to birth and dies

The compassion of the One that is manifest in the man who realizes his sonship in realizing his brotherhood with his fellow man is not grief for death, which is the inevitable change from the Many to the One, but the pitiful love for one who wanders in the darkness, separate and suffering, straying from Light and happiness, terrified by his own bad dream yet fearing to waken from it.

There is not, in this conviction of divine Unity and Compassion, that once inspired the East, any great desire for an earthly Utopia, because life on earth, although it is felt to be part of the manifestation of the divine Being, is not regarded as the final aim of any human being. One of the most

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profound sayings of Jesus was "I am among you as he that serveth". As the lilies of the field grow in their beauty, so may man grow in his beauty and manifest the glory of God, but the glory is a poem and music in which compassion and harmony testify to unity. The Buddhist *sutra* that is most prized by the Zen Buddhists—or perhaps one should not call them Buddhists?—the *Lankavatara*, has a passage in it in which the Buddha is supposed to be discoursing of the nature of himself, as the Supreme Being, which reads: "Those who know me will recognize me everywhere", and another which says: "As long as mind evolves, these vehicles cannot be done away with."¹ The ancient idea of divine Unity did not have this itch to do away with the vehicle because it was felt to be illusive. It accepted the expression of the One as a natural and a very beautiful event, not necessarily eternal, but valid. The idea of this expression as Music was lovely in itself. Creation was not regarded as an unfortunate sequel to the desire to be, but as an artist regards artistic composition. It could be in this Mode or that, but the Mode was a guiding pattern impressing on the form a deeply satisfying character due to a proportionate relation. It was worth while because it was 'creative' in the modern sense of the word. When men could regard themselves as the elements in this musical composition, by reason of the fact that they were also the Composer, the whole idea of creation—of expression—became a noble and a magnificent thing.

¹ *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*. D. T. Suzuki. London, 1930.

THE MEANING OF INDIVIDUALITY

It was a fine conception, difficult, perhaps, but far less tortuous and complicated than the later philosophies. If I may suggest a comparison, the philosophies of later times were the products of preachers and teachers seeking to build up an arbitrary approach to knowledge of the One. The earlier concept was the flash of insight of a poet who had grasped a natural Law and recognized it for the authentic metre of the *chandas* uttered by that divine Musician and Poet mankind has named 'God'

It is open to mankind both to listen, and to share in the utterance. That, it seems to me, is the sequel to that very ancient religious philosophy that man arrived at, in the early days of his civilized manhood, as the result of thought and a reverent contemplation of Nature. Mankind retains his liberty, but if he is to make music he must attune his ear to the laws of harmony which imply and indeed are based on *ratio*. This due relationship to others within a unity itself implicates fellowship. Fellowship implies compassion—*feeling with* others, because our own 'individuality' has no meaning except as a mutually conditioned relationship with theirs. Here is no room for egoism or domination. The co-operation implicated is organic, in which variety of function, duly proportioned and interdependent, also implies the equal worth of all

If this is, indeed, a lost ideal, may it not be recoverable?

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